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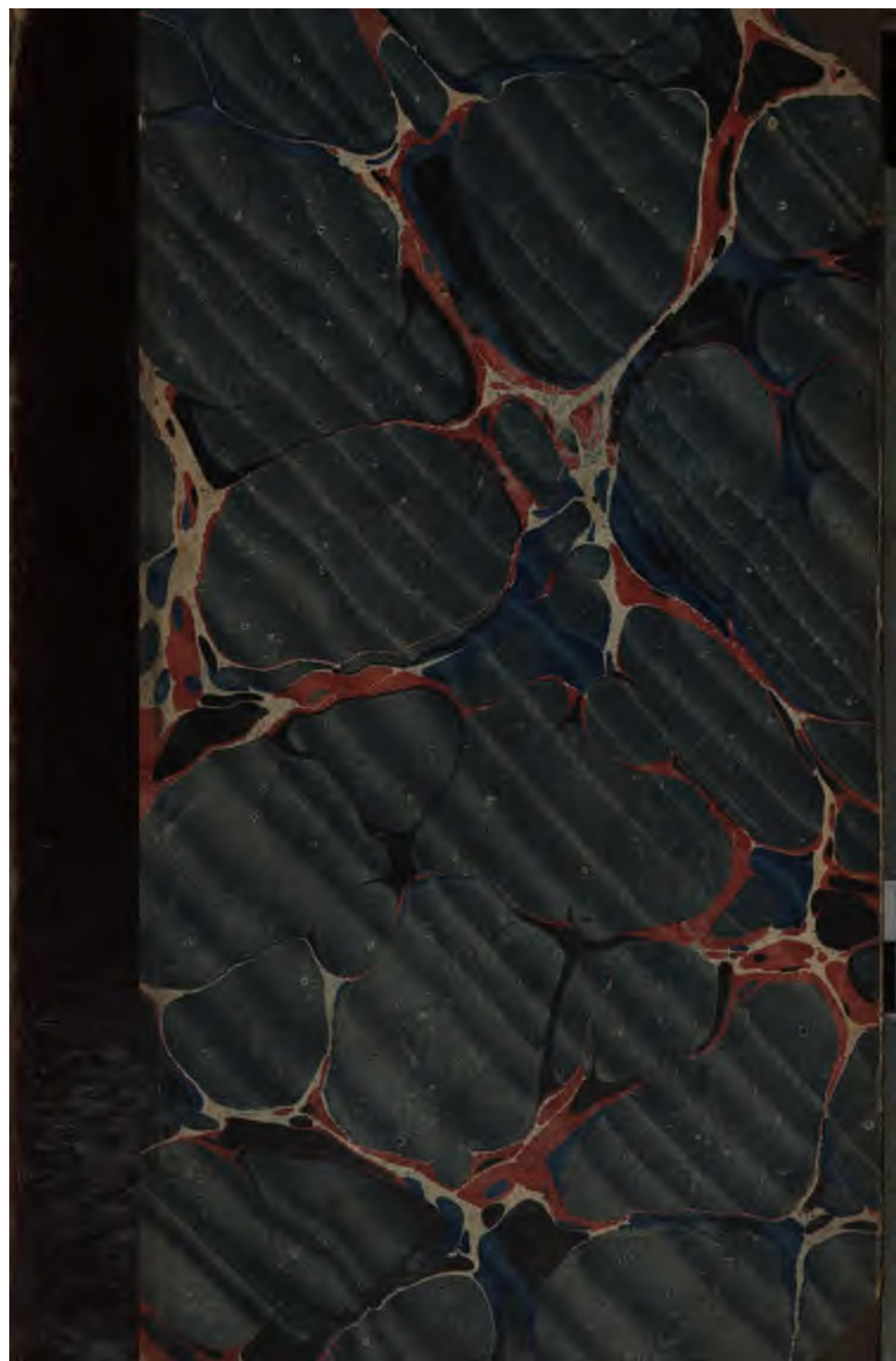
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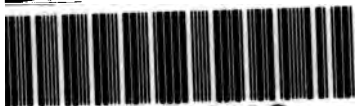
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B O O K I.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

VO-I.

B

ELSIE SEYMOUR.

CHAPTER I.

ALFRETON.

"WILL you come upstairs, Kate, and see my room? We can pass away an hour or so, until mamma is ready for a walk." Such was the invitation which Katharine Elliott received from Emmeline Morden on the first morning of her stay at Alfreton. The ladies had left the breakfast-room and were conversing toge-

ther, in one or two small groups, in the spacious library. Lady Morden was pointing out the view from the window overlooking the broad terrace, and was planning a drive to Carrowsby Castle after luncheon, and a walk through the gardens and village before. The September day was cloudy and uninviting, and Katharine, not unwillingly, accepted her new friend's proposal to go upstairs to her sitting-room, feeling that it would afford her the opportunity she desired of becoming better acquainted with her.

Between Katharine and Emmeline there was a contrast of appearance no less striking than that of their characters. The first was a brunette with pensive eyes and a tall, graceful figure ; while the second was fair, shorter, and remarkably lively and bright.

Katharine Elliott had arrived only the day before with her brother, Francis, on a visit to Alfreton. Her widowed mother, Lady Elliott, was too great an invalid to accompany

them, and they had left her with their sister Mary, at Brighton.

In a short time the two girls were seated alone in a boudoir, elegantly furnished and decorated with prints, of which the window overlooked the flower garden and shrubbery beyond.

Emmeline exhibited her drawing-books, her presents, her music, and all her possessions; and, before they had been long together, her merry laugh rang through the chamber, so that even the more demure Katharine was inspired by her hilarity.

The difference of age between them was not sufficient to account for the diversity of their humours. Katharine was more thoughtful than one-and-twenty might seem to warrant, while Emmeline was, at certain moments, when her spirits were high, more childlike than nineteen.

"I wish we could have gone in Fred's boat

to-day," said Emmeline; "instead of driving to Carrowsby, as I hear mamma proposes. We shall be sure to call at Mr. Lisle's. Mamma always calls at the vicarage, as the road to the Castle lies through their grounds; and then we shall have to sit for half-an-hour, talking to old Mrs. Lisle and Miss Pinsant her sister, such a stupid old quiz! If Laura Lisle is at home, we shall probably have the delight of her escort. Sometimes they make us eat horrid dry cake, which looks as if it had been twenty years upon a dusty shelf, and drink nasty home-made wine, which turned Fred quite sick one day, and he declares he will never call there again."

"Is Mr. Lisle a clergyman?" enquired Katharine.

"Yes, he is the Vicar of Carrowsby, but *he* is never at home when we call. He and Mrs. Lisle are all very well, for old people, but Miss Pinsant is such a stiff set-up old maid

with a dreadfully sour face, and, as to the daughters, one is married and the other, Laura, is as ugly as sin, but tolerably good-natured. She visits at her married sister's house a good deal, so that we are not sure to find her at home."

"They are not much of neighbours to you, I suppose," returned Katharine.

"No—they go out very little. Laura has never even learnt to dance, they have been brought up so strictly! I believe they are nearly related to Lord Portaldowne, and Mr. Lisle's eldest brother lives at Cawthorne Court, in Gloucestershire. His nephew is thought agreeable and is tolerably good looking. He sometimes comes to Carrowsby, but I don't much like him. He is too reserved and serious, I think."

"Have *you* any agreeable neighbours about here?" enquired Katharine.

"It depends who you call neighbours,"

replied Emmeline: "If you take in the county, we have plenty, but I don't know what sort of people you like!"

"That is a difficult question to answer."

"No, but do you think you should like a kind of person like Fred?"

"I don't think I can judge," replied Katharine, as the colour mounted to her cheeks at being asked so strange a question, which she might have felt more inclined to resent, but for the bright smiling eyes so drolly fixed on hers, and which made her feel with what simple innocence the question was put: "You know, I have scarcely seen your brother."

"No, but I think one judges people directly. I know *I* do. I think *your* brother, Mr. Elliott, seems so nice. Is not he a very kind brother?"

"Very!"

"I thought so, and I am sure he is exces-

sively clever. Does he live at home with you, when you are at Brighton?"

"Oh, no! He lives in London. He is studying law at Lincoln's Inn and intends to be a barrister."

"I wonder you all came home from abroad. You must find Brighton so odious after Italy. I should like so much to go there. Papa has half promised to take us soon. When I once go, I don't think I shall ever wish to come back. Have you been to Rome and Florence?"

"Yes, but I did not feel as if I should never wish to return, much as I was delighted with them."

"Are you fond of music? By-the-bye, a friend of mine, Elsie Seymour, brought me such a pretty song. She is very clever, though Fred won't allow that she is anything but a blue; and she translated this song from a Neapolitan air and has had it published—here it is—shall I sing it to you?"

NEAPOLITAN BOAT SONG.

To Ischia our bark is bound ;
By Procida we sail !
The purple waves they foam around,
And the sea-winds never fail.

So steer we forth, at break of day,
From Naples' or Gaëta's Bay.

Merrily, merrily, steer we along,
And cheer us the while with a Lazzarone song ;
Or we pray to Our Lady to shield us from ill,
While our sails good St. Anthony scorns not to fill.
In fair Capri's Isle we might dwell at our ease,
Or lie in the shade of Amalfitan trees,
But I'd rather brave the storms of our bay,
Than slumber on shore for a single day.

The blue billow's foam,
Is our only home

And the sea-winds our only play !
St. Anthony shall guide our bark
Through the sunshine and the dark,
From the Mole of Naples' shore,
Round the point of Baia's Bay,
Till the Mount is seen no more,
And its fire-founts cease to play !

Steer along, steer along ;
Gaëtani, hear our song !
For to Mola's coast we sail,
By the Isles our bark is bound,
And the sea-winds never fail,
While the blue waves foam around.

Emmeline sang Elsie's song to an air which was yet more spirited than the words of her translation.

"I like it very much," said Katharine, "do you happen to have the original Neapolitan words?"

"No, but Elsie promised to let me have them. Did you never meet her in Italy? The Seymours were for some time at Naples."

"I did not go out at all when I was there, but I think I remember the name," replied Katharine.

"And I wonder," continued Emmeline, "that you never met Mr. Herbert Lisle."

"Mr. Lisle ! Oh, yes ! I remember a

Mr. Lisle, in Rome. A young man of about thirty—rather good looking. Is he any relation to the Lisles we are going to see to-day ?”

“Yes ; nephew to the clergyman, if it is the same I mean,” replied Emmeline, “he has dark hair and eyes, and is rather tall than otherwise. Perhaps he stoops a very little, at least he does not hold himself quite as straight as I should like.”

“It must be the same person,” said Katharine, “he is passionately fond of art is not he ?”

“I dare say he would be—he is rather cold and serious I think,” replied Emmeline, “but then I have generally met him at his uncle’s, or with his cousins, and they are enough to freeze any one into an icicle. But I think he is *rather* pleasant too, although Fred can’t bear him, and declares he is a muff.”

Katharine was pretty competent to put a true value upon Fred’s likes and dislikes, and

was therefore pleased to give a turn to the conversation, which was soon interrupted by Lady Morden's coming to ask them whether they would accompany her in a walk through the grounds.

CHAPTER II.

CARROWSBY.

ALFRETON was a massive stone structure, of the last century, with a square tower at each corner and an enclosed porch in the basement story, on either side of which, a flight of steps conducted to the hall door. The towers and, perhaps, the balustrade around the roof, had once earned it the reputation of being a fine specimen of the Italian style, and, indeed, it is highly probable that, no villa in Tuscany could vie with it for finish of architecture or

neatness of keeping, and that, in all things, save climate, it had no reason to envy its fair originals. But, after all, what artist's work can compensate for the sunshine of the south? The mansion stood upon the edge of an acclivity and its terrace gardens overlooked a plain watered by the Trent, which bounded the deer-park in that direction. After leaving the front of the house, the drive passed through woods to the park in the vale below, and thence followed the margin of the river as far as the lodge gate. Magnificent oak and beech extended their branches on all sides and, where the underwood ceased, the space beneath their boughs was carpetted with fern and turf, upon which herds of deer were browsing or reclining.

Beautiful as was the view which caught the eye of Francis Elliott, as he sat beside Emmeline upon the box of the barouche, he was more inclined to listen to the merry converse, and

watch the sparkling eyes of his lively companion, than to dwell upon the forest scenes, which, at most times, he loved so well.

"*There,*" said she, as they approached the Trent, "is Fred's boat-house. What fun it would have been to have gone upon the water! I suppose you can row?"

"Yes, I pulled a good deal at Cambridge, although I have had no practice lately."

"But there is a sail to the boat, and, with this breeze, we might have gone up to Walcot-Court, where the Spencers live who are coming to dinner to-day. Your sister tells me you have been in Italy," pursued Emmeline, "and have brought back some beautiful sketches! I wish Fred could draw, for he is going to Egypt, and, perhaps, to Jerusalem, next winter, if he can find a companion."

"So he told me."

"Did he ask you to go? I hope you will."

"I should like it of all things, but I fear I shall scarcely be able to manage it."

"Why not? Can't you leave your studies for a few months?"

"Then I must also leave my mother and sisters."

"Oh! I am sure Lady Elliott could spare you," replied Emmeline, carried away by her earnestness. "Oh! I wish you could go with Fred! and then we should expect you to bring us back drawings of the Nile and the Holy Land."

"Well, I have promised to let him know in a few days," said Francis. "I have nothing absolutely to prevent me, excepting my unwillingness to leave my mother."

"But you sometimes left her in Italy?" enquired the persevering young lady.

"Yes. Well, I suppose I shall be obliged to give in at last," replied Francis, joining in her merry laugh. "You will succeed better than your brother in arguing me into the plan."

They were ushered into the drawing-room, a small apartment, of which the walls were hung with one or two clerical-looking prints, portraits of eminent divines, together with half a dozen framed water-colours, and the tables scattered with a select number of books, and a couple of work-boxes.

Mrs. Lisle presently entered the room, accompanied by her daughter, and followed by Miss Pinsant. Laura Lisle might have been between twenty-five and thirty. She was certainly not pretty, but Katharine did not think that Emmeline had fairly described her when she called her as ugly as sin. There was much to interest in her plain face.

Katharine sat by Laura, with whom she continued in conversation until the door was opened by a dark-haired, rather tall, but not very handsome, man, of from thirty to thirty-five years of age, in whom she recognized the Mr. Lisle she had met abroad.

Lady Morden presented Mr. Lisle to her party of friends, and almost immediately proposed taking them to the castle.

"Miss Elliott!" said Lisle as they were preparing to leave the room, "I think we last met in Italy?"

"Yes, in Rome," replied Katharine, and Herbert proceeded to enquire after Lady Elliott and her sister.

"How well the castle looks from here!" remarked Katharine, as they approached the ivy-grown structure surrounded with fine trees, from the midst of which the circular bastions and ruined square towers rose in sombre beauty.

"I think the best view is from the other side," said Lisle.

"Is it very old? What is its history?" enquired his fair companion.

"Very little of what remains is older than the fifteenth century," replied Lisle: "there has, however, been a castle upon the same site

since the time of Henry the Third, but I imagine it to have been a mere tower, or keep, for purposes of defence, built by a certain Sir Gervaise de Carrowsby, who probably sided with the Barons against the King. It was not until the time of Henry the Seventh, when the possession of the place had passed into the hands of the Nasebys, the male line of the Carrowsbys having become extinct in the wars of the Roses, that it was remodelled according to the more extended notions of the latter end of the fourteenth century. It was then re-built in all the magnificence of the Tudor style, and, with the exception of one or two bastions and the moat, looks more fitted for a luxurious dwelling-house than for purposes of defence."

"Are you fond of antiquities?" enquired Katharine.

"Yes, I can scarcely understand a person caring for history and not being a little bit of an antiquary as well. It serves to fill up the

crevices and supply the void, which a mere chronicle of events must invariably leave in the mind. I confess," pursued Lisle, "that I have no pleasure in reading a dry summary of events, unless I am able also to realise each age as it was ; to picture its social condition and to plant myself, as it were, amidst its customs and its civilization. To read of Pericles without picturing Athens, or of Lorenzo without realizing the Florence of his day, were, to me, an insipid mode of studying history,"

"Oh ! I see what you mean, but that is not what is usually meant by antiquarianism—is it?" asked Katharine. "Does not an antiquary mean a more prosaic sort of mortal, who collects old books and investigates the details of the past, caring little for the more important features of history?"

"I don't agree with you," replied her companion. "I fancy that all our great antiquarians have been imaginative men. They have all

been Sir Walter Scotts at heart, but without the power or inclination to *express* their musings of the past. Dugdale, Spellman, Camden, Herne, as well as Strutt, were all men whose imaginations realised the past ages of which they studied the details. They were men whose education and peculiar turn of mind led them to crush an exuberant fancy and vegetate upon the facts of the past ; but, however tortured and compressed, theirs was a study which commenced and was pursued from a desire to satisfy the cravings of the imagination to realise the civilization and existence of by-gone days ; and these men have done no mean service to history. For instance, what a help is Dugdale's Monasticon towards picturing the condition of England in the fourteenth century ! For my part," continued he, pointing to the windows of the square court, where they now stood, "I prefer this living record of the days of Caxton to all the antiquarian disquisitions in the world !"

"I quite agree with you there," replied Katharine, laughing.

After the party had finished their survey of the Castle, Elliott expressed a wish to see the view upon the opposite side, and Emmeline offered to escort them to a spot, whence she had once drawn it. She and Francis soon outstepped their companions, who had fallen into conversation.

"I hope there will be time for me to show you our church," said Laura; "that is *if* you care to see it."

"Yes, very much," answered Katharine; "Mr. Lisle has just promised to take us to see it, and explain all about the architecture. He seems to have great taste for such things, and I am afraid I know but little about them."

"Oh, yes! my cousin is fond of art in all ways, and especially anything to do with churches. I think that, lately, he has given up less of his time to these pursuits than

formerly, but, I suppose, he has had other things to do. Did you know Herbert before?"

"Yes—that is, I had met him in Italy. I cannot say that I knew him well."

"I think it requires to know him," returned Laura, "to appreciate him. Although I almost know him as intimately as a brother, yet I fancy some people might think him peculiar; notwithstanding which, I have never seen any one who I believe to be so thoroughly good as he is."

Katharine said little more, and they soon afterwards reached the spot whence Emmeline and Francis were contemplating one of the most beautiful views of the Castle. A narrow ravine, separated them from the ruin which seemed to rise as from the summit of a wooded bank. Nothing could well exceed the beauty of its ivy-mantled battlements and massive grey towers, as seen from this position. At that moment, too, the sun was shining upon the bastions in such a manner as to produce a

peculiarly happy effect. Katharine gazed silently upon the parapet, with its fantastic spouts, or gurgoyles, shaped like men or dragons, emitting water from their mouths, the square-headed windows, with their remains of tracery, and the barbican, with its ruined turrets; endeavouring, in her imagination, to re-people it with the living men, who had feasted in its halls, or defended its strongholds, and the women who had dwelt, loved, and sighed within its bowers.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

"SHALL I have time to show the church to Miss Elliott and her brother?" enquired Herbert of Lady Morden as they approached the vicarage; "the carriage will not be ready."

"Oh! if Miss Elliott wishes to see it," replied Lady Morden, the more good-naturedly as she felt rather put out at being late, "I would call for them in passing; I suppose they would not be long?"

"No; I promise they shall not," returned Lisle.

Lady Morden followed the others, who had gone forward with Emmeline into the garden, while Francis and Katharine accompanied Herbert Lisle to the church.

"We must not keep Lady Morden waiting, Kate," said Frank to his sister.

"No; we shall not be long," replied Lisle; "the door is always open. My uncle has fallen into the good habit of leaving the church doors open to the poor, who, after all, have a lawful claim, one should suppose, to go and worship in their own parish church."

The interior of the church was simple in design, and bore about it evidences of being a restored rather than a newly built edifice. Stained glass windows aided the effect of the architecture, and all the internal arrangements conduced to the religious solemnity of the structure.

"It is really as lovely a specimen of a

country church as I have ever seen!" exclaimed Katharine, as she came out; "I admire the wooden roof, with the blue and gold ground, the arches and windows, that beautiful brass railing in the chancel, and the open seats; but I wish I knew something about the style. I am afraid there is no time to-day for a lesson on Gothic architecture. I prefer it so much to every other, with the single exception which I would make in favour of St. Peter's!"

"Are you a Roman Catholic?" enquired Lisle, somewhat abruptly.

"I! no! oh, dear no! why?"

"I thought so, from your preference of St. Peter's," returned Lisle.

"Our English Cathedrals were built by Roman Catholics as well as St. Peter's," suggested Katharine.

"True! in one sense they were," argued Lisle; "they were built at a time when the whole of Western Christendom was sub-

jected to the Roman See. *That* subjection was a gradual process, and so was the propagation of those corruptions which led to the Reformation. The corruption may have commenced after the days of St. Gregory, and increased in those of Hildebrand, but it did not grow to excess until the times of Leo and of Julius. In our English church, in the Saxon days, there was purity as compared with our same church in the days of Henry the Seventh, under the more complete domination of Rome. So the tenth century was purer than the twelfth, the thirteenth than the fourteenth, and the fourteenth than the sixteenth. And so again, the great focus of this corruption was Rome itself, and it had reached its zenith in the days of Leo the Tenth, when St. Peter's was built. The English Christianity which built Westminster and York was pure compared with the Roman Christianity which constructed St. Peter's."

"I fancy I see your meaning," hesitated Katharine, when he paused.

"Yes," continued Lisle, warmed by his argument; "and St. Peter's is the very exemplification of a false and paganized Christianity. Rome must have been courting heathenism very assiduously to go to its temples for her most exalted models of architecture. It is only far away from Rome—in England, in Normandy, in Flanders, or in Germany, that anything like purely Christian art is to be found. The nearer you approach to that great metropolis of the church, the more heathenized the architecture becomes. In Rome itself there is absolutely no Gothic at all. In Sienna and in Pisa there is a commencement of Christian style. In Milan and in Lombardy more; but scarcely until you reach Strasburg and Cologne do you find the pure embodiment of Christian feeling which the unsophisticated northern nations attained,

notwithstanding the Roman domination which never could possess the same corrupting influence over them which it had over those more immediately beneath its controul. So in Spain, as the Roman yoke increased, did Christian art decline."

"Well, but I do not quite see that Gothic is *necessarily* Christian art!" said Katharine.

"No, and pardon me," added her brother Frank, who had, all the while, been listening attentively; "surely the Basilicas of Rome were built in the very style of the ancient heathen structures, and they were the churches of the primitive Christians, and of ages which you will allow to be the purest of those which possessed any churches at all!"

"In the days of the Basilicas," replied Lisle, "there *was* no Christian art. Christianity had not begun to meddle with art. The seed was pure, but it had not expanded. For instance, the primitive Christians, as is well

known, had slaves. Christianity had not yet dealt with the question of slavery. The spirit of freedom was *there*, but it had not expanded. It required ages for this gospel change to be effected, and yet no one doubts but that the expansion of Christianity results in an abolition of slavery. And, in a similar way, the Christian mind, by degrees, and as it required structures for its worship, adopted a certain tone of art to harmonize with its peculiar spirit. Christianity loves parables, and allegories, and types, and so its art became allegorical and typical. But I will not discuss *that* question at present; yet, is it not a singular fact, that the only style of architecture which originated in Christian ages, and was the production of Christian times, as well in its details as its aggregate, is entirely discarded from Rome, and is found in its perfection in some of the countries farthest removed from that ancient metropolis of the western church?"

"Yes, *that* is certainly curious," granted Katharine.

"But, still, I cannot quite give up the Basilicas and the Greek churches!" said Frank, when their farther discussion was interrupted by the barouche driving up before the roofed entrance to the church-yard, which antiquaries, such as Herbert, would have called by the technical name of the lych-gate.

"How do you like Mr. Lisle?" enquired Emmeline of her companion as the carriage drove away.

"Pretty well. Is he a cousin of the young lady who came with us to the Castle?"

"Yes; did you admire her?"

"No, I can't say that I was much smitten," returned Francis. "She is not in her *première jeunesse*, I should think."

"Don't you think so? What do you think of her eyes, stuck as far apart as currants in a

school-cake, and her snub-nose and wide mouth? Fred declares she is like an alligator. It is very naughty, is not it? but we always call her the crocodile. You missed the cake and wine. Fred will be sure to ask you whether you had any?"

"Did *you* eat any?"

"Oh, no! But it was such fun! Mamma and I were prepared for it, but Miss Wall and Mrs. Fowler were taken by surprise, and I could see them munching away at that horrible dry compound, as hard as a board, and then I watched their faces when they tasted the raisin wine, and caught Miss Wall's eye as she set down her glass, pretending to like it."

"I fancy Mr. Lisle is better than the rest. Don't you think so? I rather liked him?"

"Oh! decidedly! I wonder he comes to stay-with such stupid people. Do you thiuk him clever?"

"I don't know. I think he seems fond of talking, and has some strange notions," replied Francis.

"Fred can't endure him," said Emmeline; "he always thinks he is going to preach a sermon. He is very serious, I fancy, and good, and that sort of thing. But I don't know that *I* dislike him particularly."

"Are you not hard upon him? Perhaps you like more lively people?"

"Yes, I hate people with long faces that look as if they could never laugh," returned Emmeline, who presently turned the conversation into another channel, and renewed her solicitations on the subject of the eastern tour.

Meanwhile, Katharine heard Mr. Lisle criticised by the ladies inside the barouche. These criticisms were less severe than Emmeline's, and concerned his opinions and unsocial habits rather than his manners or appearance. She felt inclined to defend both Mr. Lisle and

his cousin Laura, of whom, notwithstanding her lack of beauty, she had retained a more agreeable impression than Emmeline's caricature was calculated to give.

Thus conversing, they drove through the green woods and wild park, and reached Alfreton about an hour before dinner.

Lady Morden heard that an expected guest had arrived in the person of Mr. Montagu, and that he was with Sir Edward in the library.

Katharine accompanied Emmeline up-stairs, while Lady Morden went to welcome her visitor, and await the arrival of another addition to the company.

When Katharine came into the drawing-room, she found nearly the whole party assembled, and was introduced to Mrs. and Miss Spencer. Besides these, there was a Mr. Bateson—an old gentleman of sixty—short, round, and flabby, but with polished manners of the old school. He was, however, one of those

men who are either useful or tedious, and it depended upon the company and the occasion as to whether he was esteemed an advantage or a bore. He was a gourmand, a boaster, and a punster, if a retailer of bad puns deserves that name. Being well connected, and entertaining to a large party, he was never at a loss for society, where he delighted in showing off his eccentricities.

Lastly, there was Mr. Montagu, whose strikingly handsome person could not fail to attract observation.

Cecil Montagu, the only surviving brother of Lord Alcester, was a man of five or six and thirty, tall, and gracefully made. His dark brown hair curled luxuriantly about his temples, but without concealing his high forehead, while it set off his black and sparkling eyes. His features, which were almost Grecian in their symmetry, seemed to beam with the soft expression of a southern clime. No less captivating was the musical voice and well-chosen

language of this adept in the art of pleasing, who was born under some happy star, or so endowed by Providence, that, whatever he undertook, either in feats of bodily skill or mental labour, he invariably achieved to admiration and excelled all competitors.

Francis Elliott took Emmeline to in dinner, and there might have been a slight look of disappointment in her face when she perceived that Katharine was next to Mr. Montagu, while she was between Frank and Mr. Bateson, with whom, however, she managed to keep up a continual conversation.

"Allow me to recommend you, Miss Morden, to try that dish which is now being handed round," said Mr. Bateson. "It is a *turbót à la crème et aux gratins* and is excellent. I have seldom eaten anything better; I shall venture to take some more. You have been in Paris, I think?"

"No; I am sorry to say; never!"

"Ah! That is to come. You must go

there. I recollect an excellent *turbót à la crème* at the Rocher de Cancale. The best dish, almost, I ever remember; it was so good that we sent for the *artiste* and I was commissioned, by the rest, to thank him. In those days, you know, I was a great authority in Paris, and thanked him with some warmth. The poor man had tears in his eyes. I shall never forget him—poor fellow! it was too much for him—he never recovered it. Last year I went to see his tomb in *Père la Chaise* and bestowed a pension upon his family. I cannot see *turbót à la crème*, without thinking of my poor friend. I see by the bill-of-fare, that there is a *vol-au-vent à la financière* coming. The arrangement of the *carte* is good. It shows an artistic feeling. Pray is your cook a Frenchman?"

"No—he is English."

"Ah! Yes! A man-cook, at all events! I was sure of it. It is no disparagement to your sex to depreciate their artistic genius."

Poor Ude said to me one day, that he could never make out how it is that women, while they are much quicker in learning the elements and details of cookery, never attain to the acmè of the culinary profession. *C'est tout simple, mon ami*, I said. Go to the Louvre and tell me how it is that, while more women than men are to be found in the *ateliers de peinture*, yet there are scarcely any female painters."

"Surely," exclaimed Emmeline, who was half bored yet half amused by his conversation, "You do not mean to compare cooks with painters?"

"Yes. Both are artists, and I was about to explain to you why friend Ude thanked me for the hint, and some days afterwards said to me—*'Ah ! Monsieur, vous êtes encore plus artiste que moi.'*"

"Yes," returned Emmeline, "but you have not explained why we poor women are to be

considered so inferior to you men, as artists. I shall be forced to give up my water colours, and get mamma to dismiss the kitchen maids."

"You mistake me," replied Bateson. "Your water colours are charming. They have *heart* instead of *art*. The kitchenmaids, too, are better than men for the details. Now, take a *salade à la mayonnaise*. A woman will boil the eggs, or prepare the lobster or chicken—I almost prefer chicken or fish—or cut the lettuce, it should not be too small, or mince the herbs, but it will require a man's mind to master the *ensemble* and combine these details into a perfect whole. This is still more the case with the artistic arrangement of a dinner, so that the dishes may follow each other like the various parts in one of Beethoven's symphonies, or Mendelssohn's oratorios. Your sex, pardon me, have never been Handels or Beethovens, neither can they be Udes or Béchamel's. I do not speak this to their disparagement—far from it—their province lies

in matters of detail. I have tasted an *omelette* beyond all praise, from a female hand, and I have seen sketches *à ravir*. Indeed I prefer them. They are all heart and feeling."

"Pray what are the chorusses in your dinners, *à la Mendelsohn*?" enquired Emmeline.

"I should think you would have a chorus of frogs, like Aristophanes," said Frank Elliot, who had been listening to the learned discussion.

"No," calmly continued Mr. Bateson, "I have always regarded an artistic dinner as rather bearing a resemblance to painting than music. A dinner of high art, like a picture of high art, has its landscape back-ground of vegetables, its lakes of champagne, its rivulets of Burgundy and claret, its distant snow-peaks of ice. In the foreground stand conspicuous its more fleshy conceptions, the superhuman flights of its contriver for its *vol-au-vents*, *soubises* and *tartares* seem to me to embody

qualities like the Grecian divinities, like Mercury and other Olympians."

"What divinity does a tartare represent?" asked Emmeline, laughing.

"One of the Gods of Tartarus I should think," replied the epicure, "although I have always had a feeling that our English *pièces de résistance*, bear more resemblance to Vulcan and his infernal crew."

"And to Pluto?" asked the young lady.

"Ah! *c'est Plutôt de lui que je parlais*," returned Mr. Bateson.

"Which dish represents Apollo?" again ventured Emmeline.

"There are several dishes dedicated to that God," he replied, "for instance, *potage à la Palestine*, without any *apology*, I would venture to re-name *potage à l' Apollon*."

"Why?"

"Oh! don't you know that it is made of the root of the sun-flower, or a plant of that genus,

which we wrongly denominate *Jerusalem* artichoke, deriving the word from the Italian *girasole* or *sun-flower* artichoke. Well, and is not the sun-flower properly the flower of Phœbus?

Meanwhile, Mr. Bateson showed himself to be no mere theorist, but was devoting himself to the practical appreciation of his favourite art, in which he became so wrapt, at times, as to give Emmeline opportunities of conversing with Frank Elliott, who was highly amused at this eccentric *gourmand*, and opened his eyes pretty wide at the novel theories which he broached.

So loud were many of Mr. Bateson's remarks, that they attracted, as they were intended, the attention of persons seated at the more distant parts the table. During a pause in his conversation with Lady Morden, Mr. Montagu overheard part of the disquisition upon the culinary science, and perceived that

his neighbour, Katharine Elliott, was listening to it with astonishment.

"You do not seem to me fully to appreciate the argument at the other end of the table, of which I have caught a few fragments," remarked Montagu, "and if I mistake not," he continued, laughing, "you prefer a symphony of Beethoven to a *syndeipnon* of Ude. Are you sufficiently musical to have a favourite composer?"

"I fear I must plead guilty to liking something simpler than Beethoven," returned Katharine, who was not particularly musical, nor ashamed to own her deficiency. "I am afraid I only like a *very* simple style, although I cannot say that I have heard or studied the great composers sufficiently to have learnt to appreciate them."

"You like Italian airs better than heavy German symphonies, but I dare say you are fonder of painting and poetry?"

"Oh, yes, I am very much fonder of painting," she replied.

"When Shakespeare condemns the soul uninspired by music, as fit for treasons and all other crimes," pursued Montagu, "I feel certain that he takes it in its sense of harmony. In *that* sense, painting, statuary, and poetry, are music. I am sure that a fine temple, a cathedral, or a fairy palace, like the Alhambra, convey to the fancy very similar impressions to those of music. As sounds describe the sombre grandeur of religion, so does a cathedral tell the same tale and as they picture a luxurious paradise of delight, so, for instance, does the Alhambra suggest a similar dream."

Katharine felt interested in his conversation. He spoke more calmly, and perhaps more persuasively, than Lisle. While his beautiful eyes beamed with animation, there was, nevertheless, a repose in his manner and intonation, which expressed dignity and self reliance. He was careful not to question her about her-

self, and yet, by little and little, he so led the conversation as to draw out her history. To say that his manner inspired confidence were to underrate his faculties, for the power he possessed, was that of charming those with whom he conversed and gathering from them, in spite of themselves, all that he desired to know. In every sentence there was a meaning beyond the words, for his eyes spoke yet more eloquently than his musical voice, of which the tones lulled his hearers into trusting all he said.

It is rare to taste the full delight of conversation and Katharine may be pardoned for having felt a momentary regret at losing Mr. Montagu's, when it became time for the ladies to withdraw.

In the evening a dance was proposed in the saloon, the polished floor of which was admirable for a gallop. Emmeline, who was all anxiety to dance with Mr. Montagu, was obliged to accept Frank Elliot, who had asked

her first. Francis, who already began to fancy himself rather in love with Emmeline, felt decidedly jealous of Cecil Montagu, who thought it incumbent upon him to devote a small portion of the evening to the daughter of his hosts. There was nothing in his manner really to excite jealousy, for he was equally polite to all whom he addressed, suiting his conversation to their respective intellects or tastes, with exquisite and unflinching tact. During the earlier part of the evening he did not approach Miss Elliott, but danced with Emmeline and the four or five commonplace young ladies who had been invited for the purpose of acting as partners.

When the party had broken up, Katharine retired and, in the solitude of her room, meditated upon the various impressions of the past day. She had been struck with the earnest frankness of Lisle. His tone of mind was new to her. There was a fresh vigour and manliness about his conversation, which was marked

with high feeling and seemed to proceed from a thoughtful mind. She remembered that while she sat at her dressing-table before dinner, she had been recalling Herbert, but the impression (if it deserved the name) which he had left was now entirely eclipsed by Cecil Montagu.

How abrupt and stern appeared to her recollection the arguments of Lisle, as compared with the flowing and persuasive phrases of the handsome Montagu, and nevertheless, when she came to think them over, she seemed to remember more of the sentiments of the first than of the second ; while the image of Cecil haunted her fancy until she could not clearly picture the plainer features of Herbert Lisle.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EPISODE.

KATHARINE's education, while it had not inured her to any very strict notions of self-discipline, had rather strengthened than superseded that native delicacy of feeling which should lead a woman to discard from her imagination the first dangerous visions tending to enthral it. Her last thoughts at night were, as far as she could preserve them, untainted by an earthly dream ; and yet it was long before she could entirely banish the recollections of the day and

especially the conversations of the evening. When she arose and looked from her window, she felt a peaceful calm steal over her as she gazed upon the beautiful prospect lighted up by the first rays of a September sun. Through a vista of the Park, bounded by oak and beech, she beheld the broad river, backed by wooded hills partly enshrouded in the mist which rose from its waters. She opened the window. The autumnal air was chilly but reviving, and she enjoyed the fragrance proceeding from the fern and timber—a forest perfume which might have scented the atmosphere since the days when Alfreton was included in the Royal Forest of Needwood.

She had scarcely finished her toilet when her brother Francis knocked at the door and asked her whether she was inclined for a walk. With him she wandered along the terrace to the shrubberies, and so, by various pathways, until they reached the Trent. It was a crisp, bright morning. The sun sparkled in the dew upon

the grass, and the distance was veiled in a soft haze. Their walk was most enjoyable and gave them time to converse upon their past doings and future plans.

"You see, Kate," said Francis, "I don't like leaving my mother for so long. It is all very well to say that she was alone with Mary in Italy, but remember, it was partly through my persuasion that she returned to England, on purpose that we might be near each other."

"I cannot see that mamma can miss you," returned Kate, "for four or five months. I am quite certain what she will say. I have written this morning and mentioned it."

"No! What have you said?" enquired Frank.

"Only that Mr. Morden is very anxious to persuade you to join him in an excursion up the Nile and that, as you can better spare the time now than afterwards, I think it a great pity you should decline it."

"But, supposing my mother should be ill, or that she should determine to remove of Torquay or anywhere else while I am away—I think it would seem so very selfish, my going off to Egypt."

"My dear Frank, surely she wants you much less here than she did in Italy, when you were far away from her. Uncle and Aunt Reginald would be too glad to attend to us, besides Aunt Fortescue. Remember, you always talked of going to Egypt to meet Godfrey when he returns from India—and I don't think that is very likely to happen until you are called to the bar, and then you will be busy at your profession. You always wanted to go to the East. Oh! I am sure it would be a pity to lose this opportunity!"

"It is certainly a good chance, and I have nothing to hinder me now as I should have at a future time," rejoined Frank, who was only opposing Katharine's arguments in order that she might convince his judgment. "I think I

will enclose a line to my mother, if you have not sealed your letter. Or, no—I will write separately. How long are we to stay at Uncle Reginald's? For I am thinking that I could leave you and run up to London to make some arrangements. I should rather like to let my chambers for six months if I could."

"Aunt Reginald did not fix any time and I am afraid she will press us to stay for a fortnight," said Katharine. "That reminds me that Lady Morden has asked us till next week, but I said I thought we could not remain beyond Saturday."

"No," returned Frank, "because that will make it so late before we can leave Lockwood. Let us see. This is Thursday, so we leave the day after to-morrow. I should like very well to have stayed till next week all the same."

"You know I wrote to tell Aunt Reginald we should be there on Saturday," said Kate, somewhat reluctantly, for she was not more anxious than her brother to curtail this plea-

sant visit : and yet, she felt it might be better to keep to the time which they had fixed. "We shall find Lockwood dreadfully dull after this," she continued. "Did not you think the party very pleasant last night?"

"Yes—pretty well—indeed, *very* pleasant," answered Frank. "I like those Spencers; but what an extraordinary animal that Mr. Bateson is; and as to Mr. Montagu, I cannot say I very much fancy him. What did you think of him?"

"That is just the way with *you*, Frank. I wonder if all men are alike in that!" exclaimed Kate. "Whenever one happens to meet with any one who is rather above the average in agreeableness, you are certain to abuse him. It must be jealousy, I believe."

"Oh! so you are standing up for Mr. Montagu, are you? Well I have no right, perhaps, to abuse him, as you call it, for I had scarcely a word of conversation with him; but I thought he seemed to talk as if he thought he was

somebody. I hate hearing men give out their learning in society—especially in ladies' society."

"In short, you hate people to talk sensibly to women and are jealous of any one who has the talent of doing so agreeably and well. Is that it? But, forgive me, Frank; I was only speaking in fun. Tell me how you like Emmeline."

"Oh! I like all the family excessively," replied Frank, evading the question. "I think it is a most agreeable place to visit. I like Frederick Morden too, very well. He *may* not be very clever, and that sort of thing (although he has plenty of fun when you get him alone), but honestly, I like him infinitely better than Montagu."

"Yes," returned Kate; "but don't you think Emmeline a nice, clever girl? She is full of spirit. I like her far better than her brother. I almost fancy she might make *you* a good wife, Frank, although I don't know whether

she would be staid and serious enough for you."

"Am I so very staid, as you call it?" asked Frank. "But I don't suppose she would ever care for me. I have no fortune to marry on."

"So you *do* rather admire Miss Emmeline? Confess it. Don't you, Frank, just a little? However, I dare say you'll be able to forget her in a day or two after you leave," continued Kate, tormenting the incipient lover.

They had now reached the margin of the broad Trent, and could see more than a mile along a wide reach of the river, hemmed in on either side by woods, of which a few of the trees were already tinted with the hues of autumn. At the point where they approached the water's edge, was a bay, thickly grown with sedges and osiers, whence, as they drew near, some wild ducks took their flight. Katharine and her brother stood upon the

bank and watched with delight the moor-hens sailing in and out among the reeds. There was, moreover, a colony of chattering birds upon the trees around, which seemed like themselves, to be enjoying the fresh morning. While they paused to contemplate the scene, and inhale the autumnal fragrance, almost ere they had perceived his approach, they were joined by a third person.

"Mr. Montagu!" exclaimed Kate, suddenly calling her brother's attention to the fact.

"Good morning," said Montagu, politely bowing to Katharine and her brother; "I am glad that I was tempted to stray so far through these beautiful walks. I did not expect to find any one before me. It is impossible for anything to surpass this. In such a scene and on such a morning, you see England at its best; I doubt whether the sunny south produces anything more exhilarating."

"I never remember anything pleasanter," replied Kate.

"Are you going out shooting to-day?" enquired Frank.

"I have no plans," rejoined Montagu; "but if you shoot, I should like nothing better. We shall doubtless return in time for the ride which Sir Edward proposed to take me, in order to shew me Mr. Spencer's place. Do *you* ride?" he continued, addressing Katharine.

"Yes, sometimes; but perhaps there is no horse for me; besides, I may be expected to go in the boat—I fancy that Miss Morden is going."

"You have brought your habit?"

"Yes, I generally take it with me."

"Will you allow me," pursued Montagu, "to offer you my Arab? It would carry you to perfection and is very quiet. I will show it to your brother, if he will come and see it."

"I shall be very happy," said Frank, who was secretly pleased at the idea of having Emmeline to himself in the boat, as he thought

the riding party would keep Montagu out of his fair one's way.

"I shall be happy to mount you too, if you will accept my other horse?" returned Montagu: "I wish you would try it."

"I could not think of such a thing; but thank you all the same," answered Frank; "besides, I promised Frederick Morden to pull in his boat—I think we are to go by water to the Spencers."

"In that case we should meet. That would be delightful!" rejoined Montagu.

"But, Mr. Montagu, I really do not think I ought to accept your kind offer," put in Kate, reluctantly; "you were probably going to ride the Arab yourself, and besides, it is a great risk lending a valuable horse to a rider whom you don't know. Supposing I were to have an accident?—oh! no. Do you know, much as I feel obliged to you for offering it to me, I think I will join the boating party, thank you!"

I fancy that Mr. Morden and his sister rather expected me to go with them."

"I can assure you," replied Montagu, "that I was not going to ride the Arab to-day and I am certain that you run no risk of its coming down, as it is remarkably sure-footed. I feel confident that you will like its paces and find it an admirable lady's horse. Sir Edward, however, might have a steed which would please you better. You see I cannot abandon all hope of your being persuaded to join the riding party?"

"Oh! I infinitely *prefer* riding!" exclaimed Katharine, whose voice had already betrayed the preference; "but I fear I shall be deserting Miss Morden."

"Perhaps the other ladies are going in the boat as well," rejoined Montagu, who felt that in order to keep well with her brother he must avoid suggesting any idea of Miss Morden's forsaking the boat. The scheme, as it now stood, was marvellously to the taste of Frank

Elliott. He wanted to get rid of Montagu and to enjoy the society of Emmeline, and he was better pleased with him just at present than he had been since he met him ; “ he is not such a bad fellow after all,” thought he, “ I was perhaps hard upon him.”

As it wanted yet some little time to the breakfast hour when Katharine went into the house, Montagu proposed to go with Frank to the stables. That short walk was sufficient to enable the fascinating worldly man to captivate the youth of three-and-twenty and, from an enemy—jealous of his superiority, to convert him into a friend. While they were conversing they reached the stable-yard, where Montagu’s groom led out the Arab.

The animal was under fifteen hands, and, in all respects, admirably proportioned. Nothing could exceed the beauty of its head and neck ; in short, no sculptor could have desired a more perfect model for a horse. Frank Elliott was in ecstasies with the creature.

"Is he quiet?" he asked.

"As quiet as a lamb, sir," said the groom ;
"a child might ride him, pretty near, sir."

On their return, they found the party assembled. Montagu introduced the subject of the ride, appealing to Elliott, who was loud in his praises of the horse, and it happened fortunately for the scheme that Frederick Morden was warmly in its favour as he did not wish to have too large a party in his boat. During the morning some of the gentlemen went out shooting, but Montagu excused himself and remained, ostensibly, to write letters, but when a walk was proposed, he accompanied the ladies through the gardens, and found himself with
• Katharine in a green pathway of the wood. Their conversation turned upon Amalfi and Ravella, for Kate was an enthusiast for scenery.

"You would like Calabria," rejoined Montagu.

"Very much, I am sure I should," was her reply ; "you have been there?"

"I spent several months in the Abruzzi, and seldom passed a pleasanter time, or found more entertainment than in the primitive society into which I was thrown. I had letters from Naples to some of the country *noblesse* of those provinces, and found them excessively hospitable. I stayed some time with a Marchese di San' Benedetto near Cosenza, and shall never forget his kindness to me in all ways. Alas! that I should have had good reason to regret ever becoming an inmate of his house! The country around his place was lovely and afforded unceasing employment to my pencil and, had the weather been invariably fine, I had perhaps been spared the one dark spot in my memories of that summer."

"What was that?" enquired Katharine, who felt timid the moment after, lest her question should have been too abrupt. "Did your friendship with the Neapolitan Marchese turn out less happily than you had anticipated?"

"No, *that* remained outwardly unshaken,

however much my opinion may have changed, for he was always hospitable and kind to me. You see, the fact is that I am so indifferent an artist that I dare not show you my drawings without first interesting you in the scenes they represent, in order that you may overlook their faults for the sake of their associations. My story is unquestionably a romantic one and, as I am in some sense its hero, or rather its victim, I must submit my conduct to your most indulgent criticism. I was tired of the gaiety of Naples, and determined to rove as an artist through the Abruzzi and Calabria. My friends in Naples offered me introductions to the prefects and commanders of garrisons, as well as to various provincial families. The latter were the only ones I cared to accept, as my chief object, besides scenery, was to study the manners of the people. I left Naples at the end of May, and, after wandering for some weeks, reached Castel San' Benedetto, and presented my cre-

dentials to the Marquis, who welcomed me, with the utmost hospitality, to his mansion. Its situation was in the midst of most exquisite scenery, of the kind which Salvator' Rosa has rendered familiar to us. Everything combined to tempt me to accept his invitation to remain some time at his place. His wife, the Marchesa, was a Neapolitan of noble family, to whom he had been married three or four years. She was several years younger than himself, he being not more than four-and-thirty. I have heard her called pretty, but I cannot say that I admired her; and yet birth, amiability, and beauty had been her only fortune. They had one little boy, who was in a fair way to become a spoilt child. Besides this family of his own San' Benedetto's sister lived with them. She was twelve or fourteen years younger than her brother, indeed I scarcely think she could have been more than nineteen. I heard her history afterwards and it appeared that, when her mother died, she was left without a home, and

that her brother became her guardian. Giulietta was her name. She was not pretty, not in the least; but there was something rather interesting in her expression. At times her look was very melancholy; but, when engaged in conversation, she appeared the merriest of the party."

When I first arrived at Castel' San' Benedetto, the weather was delightful. I was wont to start upon my rambles early in the morning, and return to breakfast. I spent the heat of the day in my own rooms and finished my sketches of the morning and evening, for after five o'clock, I again set forth upon my solitary expeditions to draw or to enjoy the beautiful scenery. I had a small, jet black Calabrese horse, which I rode among those wild ravines and tied to trees, while I sat down upon a rock to sketch. During the earlier part of my stay, my life was one of comparative loneliness, for although I met the family at meal time, and sat talking for an hour or so with San' Benedetto, there

were so few new thoughts suggested or associations recalled in these conversations, that they seemed to make no break in the uniformity of my solitude ; and, indeed, when I look back upon that time I remember less of San' Benedetto's anecdotes and sayings than of my own musings. I used to sit for hours in some wild glen, lost in happy *rêveries*, or creating bright castles in the air. All this while I had seen but little of the Marchesa or of Giulietta, when suddenly the weather changed, and we had three or four days of pouring rain. You have seen Italian rain and know the torrents in which it falls at times. My bright sunsets were exchanged for prolonged conversations with my good friend the Marchese, whose information and ideas were of the most circumscribed description and who felt no curiosity to extend his knowledge. I found Giulietta the most agreeable of the three, for the Marchesa was dull to a degree. Her sister-in-law, though deficient in education, was not wanting

in quickness of intellect. Her mind was original and naturally powerful. I soon found that she was the only one of the party with whom I could converse with pleasure. She was eager in acquiring knowledge and clever in her remarks. Her society was the only thing which, in any degree, reconciled me to my banishment during those rainy days. When the fine weather returned, I still found time to talk to Giulietta, but always endeavoured to avoid her society, unless in the presence of her brother, or the Marchesa. San' Benedetto would often laugh at his sister about her curiosity, and ask her how she would gratify it in the convent. She had informed me that this was her destination, and I soon found it was understood that she was to take the veil in a few months' time. I supposed she had a vocation for a religious life and never troubled myself to inquire into any family arrangements of which San' Benedetto did not volunteer an explanation. He was tolerably communicative

about his affairs—quite a Neapolitan in his loquacity, and would sometimes speak of Giulietta as destined to be a nun, but never said much more about it. I remember his telling me one day that his estate was too impoverished to allow of portions for daughters, and that they must all look forward to the convent. ‘You know that none of our nobility,’ he said, ‘will marry without a dowry, and we cannot taint our escutcheons with plebeian alliances.’

“Having heard all this, I was the more careful not to be thrown with Giulietta in the absence of her sister-in-law, and San’ Benedetto. She would always, however, address her conversation to me, endeavouring to discover my views upon every variety of subject. Notwithstanding the care which I took to avoid her, she often came into the room where I was accustomed to draw, passing through the door so gently that I did not perceive her presence;

and there she would sit and watch me painting, or else, stand and look upon my sketch until I turned and found her beside me. At such times I was cold in my manner. I felt afraid when I saw her pensive eyes fixed upon me, lest I should be diverting her thoughts from her vocation. I never encouraged her to remain. At length, one day when San' Benedetto and his wife were gone to Cosenza, I found Giulietta upon the terrace as I was passing to mount my Calabrese. She addressed me, enquiring whether I was going out to draw. Upon my replying in the affirmative, she said she wished she might go with me. I hesitated for an excuse. She said—

“ ‘ Will you grudge me the few moments of happiness which yet remain to me on earth ? Do you not know that in a very few weeks I am to take the veil ? ”

“ I was startled when I observed the dejection of her manner as she said this. I asked her

whether it was not of her own choice that she was going into a convent. And then she turned to me as if indignant at my supposition and said :

“ ‘ Oh no ! I hate and loathe it, but I have no choice.’

“ I was taken by surprise and felt anxious to dissuade her from rushing into a religious life without any calling for it, or any desire to be secluded from the world for ever. I said :— ‘ Giulietta, you are wrong to do this—Are you not of age to act for yourself ? Surely, they will not force you to take vows against your own consent ? I will speak to your brother.’ But she told me that it would be of no use. San’ Benedetto would never consent to any daughter of his house marrying a man below the rank of a noble and, as she could not marry, she must take the veil. I told her she might delay, and ended by urging her to resist immuring herself so soon. I did not then understand, what I was afterwards told,

that in the convent where she was going, and which was composed entirely of maidens of noble houses, they were required to enter before a certain age; in order to complete their novitiate by twenty-one. I said that, whatever might be thought of it, she would be sacrificing all her happiness on earth unless she made a bold stand at once and informed her brother that she could not become a nun. She fixed her eyes upon me for a moment, and then, suddenly, threw herself at my feet, and said—

“ ‘ You alone can save me from this fate.’ ”

“ I was petrified with astonishment—I will not say that I had not some suspicion of her real meaning, but I was so utterly unprepared for it and also so doubtful, that I was perfectly sincere, when, taking her hand to raise her up, I said: “Giulietta! I will speak to your brother, and entreat him to defer your novitiate for a year or two at least!”

“ She dropped my hand, and drawing herself

up, gave me a look which I can never forget, and then, turning round, left me, and I never saw her but once again. I asked for an interview, but was refused. I spoke to San' Benedetto upon his return, but without telling him what had occurred between his sister and myself. I only urged him not to force her into a convent against her will. He did not seem annoyed at my interference, but shrugged his shoulders, and said—

“‘Ah! *Che vuole?* In our family all the women become nuns. We are poor and cannot give doweries to our daughters. *Ci vuol pazienza!*’

“It was in vain I urged other arguments; he made the same answer, and would never resume the conversation. I was indignant with myself, when I came to think over the scene which I had witnessed. When I reconsidered it, I understood what I had been asked to do to save her, and how alone I could have effected it. It would, perhaps, have been a

sacrifice, but I regretted, and shall all my life regret, not having made it. And yet, at the moment, it came upon me like a thunderbolt. I had never dreamed of marrying her. I had not even admired her with common admiration.

"I spent the night in walking about my room and thinking how I might yet rescue her from her impending doom. True she was not the wife I should have chosen. She was a simple-minded uneducated Calabrian, girl of a different religion from myself, but what did all this signify compared with the responsibility thrown upon my shoulders by refusing her. After a sleepless night I asked to see the Marchesa and told her that I longed to say a few words to her sister-in-law. She returned, after a short absence, and informed me that I could not see her before the evening, as she was not well. I mounted my Calabrese and rode off to a favourite glen, where I sat down in a cave of the rock, near a waterfall, and pon-

dered upon my strange position. I could no longer contend with nature and fell asleep.

"It was late when I awoke. I galloped homewards to the castle, where my Neapolitan servant told me that they had been looking for me in all directions, imagining that some accident must have befallen me. The Marchesa came and apologized for the absence of her husband. He had gone to Cosenza in the morning, and would return on the following day. I asked after Giulietta and was told that she had accompanied her brother to Cosenza.

"I was wretched, but there was nothing to be done, especially since I vainly endeavoured to obtain more information from the Marchesa about her sister-in-law. I thought of riding over to Cosenza in the morning, but, upon reflection, determined to await San' Benedetto's return and ask his sister's hand at once. It struck me that this was the best chance of saving her from the convent.

"It was not until the following night that he came, and then it was too late.

"Lady Morden is calling us to look at something, I think," interrupted Katharine.

They had now reached the wall garden and hot-house, where Lady Morden was exhibiting a Victoria Regia. She perhaps thought that Katharine had sufficiently absorbed Mr. Montagu's attentions, and that she would afford him a chance of talking to some one else. He showed no impatience at the interruption, but entered into conversation with Emmeline and the others. It was not until they had reached the terrace that he found an opportunity of continuing his narrative.

"You were telling me that the Marchese did not return until two days after Giulietta's departure," said Katharine.

"Exactly. Well! San' Benedetto returned, and I met him and told him that I had been miserable and, after an explanation, proposed for his sister's hand. I gave him an account

of my family and fortune and said that I would take his sister without dowry and would respect her religious faith. I said, in short, all I could say, and entreated him to grant my request. He remained silent, and appeared to listen attentively until I had finished speaking, when he exclaimed—

“ ‘ *Per Bacco !* It is too late ! She is to take the white veil on Sunday, and is already in the convent.’ ”

As all the arrangements had been made with the Archbishop, the Marchese was for leaving well alone. His sister had gone to Cosenza, at her own desire, and it seemed better to bear her loss with fortitude. After all, the marriage would have been with a heretic and a foreigner, and that went against the grain. I accompanied him to Cosenza, and saw the Prioress of the convent, who informed us that Giulietta was entirely reconciled to taking the veil.

“The Festa at length dawned. Her brother

persuaded me, much against my feelings, to accompany him to the convent church. There was an old aunt present, who gave her away. She walked erectly and knelt calmly, and it was not until she retired behind the *grille* that she gave way. I fancied I had seen her eye fixed upon me. However that may have been, she uttered a piercing scream such as I shall never forget. It echoed through the church and then she fainted. The memory of that moment can never cease to haunt me. I left the church and, hurrying to my own room, wept like a child. I was miserable. San' Benedetto found me in this state. He told me that he had been allowed to see her at the *grille* for a few moments and that she said she was happier now that the ceremony was over. I set off for Pizzo without even returning to Castel' San' Benedetto, and thence embarked for Naples. As I left the shore, and was shown the landing place of Murat, I

thought I would rather have undergone his fate than mine."

"Poor Giulietta! Have you never heard of her again?" enquired Katharine.

"Never!" replied Montagu, as they entered the house.



CHAPTER V.

A MISADVENTURE.

WHEN Frank Elliott returned from shooting he was rather vexed to find Montagu seated by Emmeline at the luncheon-table and it was not until he discovered that she was not going to ride that his spirits revived.

Before the horses had come to the door Frederick Morden had collected his boating-party and was proceeding to the river side. Frank was persevering in his attentions to Miss

Morden, but she was frequently absorbed in conversation with Miss Wall.

The wind was in their favour, and spared them the trouble of rowing for the present. This reprieve enabled Frank to make another attempt at talking to the fair object of his devotion, but she showed a decided aversion to a *tête-à-tête* and after a short time turned to her brother :

"Fred, I wish you had brought cards to play at that game. It is so stupid in a boat without something of the kind !"

"Well ! We can get cards at Walcot. The wind is changing," said Frederick, "and we must pull now, Elliott ! Do you mind pulling ! I shall want either you, or Mr. Fowler, I think."

Both offered their services, but Elliott availed himself of this opportunity for exhibiting his skill, as if he hoped thereby, to touch the heart of his cruel Dulcinea.

The banks of the river were wooded on either side, with little cessation, as far as Walcot. Here they moored the boat to the end of a broad avenue of elms, at the farther extremity of which stood the old gabled mansion of the Spencers. A short walk brought them into gardens of clipped box and yew, where they found the rest of the party already preparing for departure.

"Did you enjoy your ride?" enquired Emmeline of Katharine.

"Extremely! The Arab is charming—I wish you had been with us!"

"We have been regretting your absence, I assure you," added Montagu, "and were the more vexed when we found that Sir Edward had expected you would have joined us."

"Aye!" said Sir Edward, a well made man, with a bald head, handsome face and frank manner, "I thought you were to have come with us, Emmie?"

"I should have liked a ride of all things,

but mamma said that you had mentioned that Bruno was to be shed to-day."

"That might have been done in time if I had known. I am very sorry you were not with us."

Frederick Morden was a great favourite with the Miss Spencers and their brother, whom he had known all his life. They took him to see a pony which Mr. Spencer had lately bought for them. Katharine was invited to inspect it, and Emmeline and Montagu followed.

"It is a great pity, my love," said Sir Edward to his wife, "that Emmie did not join our party. I did not understand that Miss Elliott was to ride alone with Mr. Montagu and myself."

"Yes dear, but Miss Wall would have been left alone in the boat."

Sir Edward was accustomed to be satisfied with his wife's reasons, but the doubt which he raised in her mind, revived a thought which had already troubled her in secret, for,

like most prudent mothers, she was not averse to giving her child opportunities of conversing with men, who, from their position and fortune, were likely to make desirable husbands, should they prove suitable in other respects. It was obvious that Montagu would be a fitter companion for Emmeline than young Francis Elliott, for not only was he handsome and accomplished beyond most men, but was morally certain to succeed to the Earldom of Alcester.

"I have understood," said Mr. Bateson as they drove away in the carriage, "that there is a considerable difference of age between Mr. Montagu and his brother, the present Lord Alcester. I should think that the Earl could not be much under fifty-five and he looks even more, for his health is very bad."

"He must be quite as old as you say," replied Lady Morden, "and I imagine he is a very great invalid. He has had recourse to all sorts of systems."

"What is his complaint?" enquired Mrs. Fowler.

"I believe he suffers from a complication of disorders. I should fear he is in a very precarious state."

"I am surprised at what Mr. Bateson says about Lord Alcester's age," remarked the simple minded Mrs. Fowler, "I should think that Mr. Montagu could not be more than four-and-thirty at the very utmost!"

"He is more than that," returned Mr. Bateson. "He is, certainly, more than *that*. He can't be less, let me see, he can't be less than—than six or seven-and-thirty. I remember meeting him at a dinner at Grillon's, given by Lord Gorminstow, the year that he came of age, and that must be fifteen or sixteen years ago. I remember the dinner well. I never forget things. There was some champagne that can never be effaced from my memory. Sillery it was! Then there was a *Potage à la Bisque* and an *omelette soufflée* such

as I have never since tasted in England. Just sixteen years ago, yes! So that he must be thirty-seven. It was two years later that he first came into parliament for one of Lord Alcester's boroughs."

"Is he in parliament now?" pursued Mrs. Fowler.

"No," rejoined Lady Morden, "I think he either withdrew at the last election, or was turned out upon petition. Was it not so?"

"I think you are confounding two things," said Mr. Bateson: "in the last parliament he lost his election, through the bribery of his opponent, but his rival was unseated upon petition and Montagu came in, but at the last election he declined to stand a contest, and withdrew to the great annoyance of his party. For my part, I think he was quite right. I cannot see that a man is called upon to sacrifice himself so entirely to his party, especially

as of late, parties do not scruple to sacrifice their principles."

"Yes, but I am sorry he is no longer in parliament," returned Lady Morden; "he must feel it such a loss of occupation. But I believe he has lately spent much of his time in laying out a small place which he has in Surrey. He is also an author, I fancy, and draws admirably; indeed, he is universal in his tastes. By-the-bye, we did not hear him sing last night—he sings to perfection."

"I should like to hear him," said Mrs. Fowler, "I really never met with so agreeable and accomplished a person and not the least affected with it all."

Meanwhile Elliott had the mortification of perceiving that Emmeline enjoyed the conversation of Cecil Montagu and was loath to return to the boat when her brother announced his intention to depart. Not so the Miss Spencers. They were in high spirits at the

thought of accompanying the Mordens part of the way back.

The departure was a relief to Francis, who wanted Emmeline to himself even though he might be unable to obtain her smiles. His sister Katharine was perfectly happy. Whatever might have been her enjoyment of Montagu's society, she was truly expressing her feelings when she told Emmeline that she had missed her. She had no selfish desire to monopolize her agreeable companion and, while she basked in the sunshine of his attractions, longed that others should appreciate them as keenly as herself.

The equestrians rode to see the boating party embark. A favorable wind had arisen and enabled them to use the sail. Instead of cards, which had been proposed, Agnes Spencer suggested the game of lights, at which Emmeline especially excelled. Francis Elliott was so fortunate as to be always the first

to guess the words, which put him in spirits, as it seemed to raise him in the estimation of his divinity. Emmeline chose the word *Frank*, and proceeded to describe it as a quality to be desired, as a Teutonic race, as a people delighting in war and glory, as a person present, as a privilege once possessed by British senators, as a coin, as, in three senses, a quality of Henry the Eighth's most chivalrous rival, and, in four senses, a possession of the same personage.

"I hope it is always mine in two senses," said Elliott, "and when I travel to Paris, in three?"

"I can vouch for your having it in one sense," replied Emmeline.

"I wish I was sure that in that one sense it could meet your approval."

"If I were to say so, perhaps I might be wanting in the quality," retorted Emmeline.

'I wish I had the thing, (not the person,) as

well as the quality. Most people would like me better if I had a myriad of the thing than without it."

"*I* should not for one," returned Frank.

"Your saying that, proves that you have it only in name," rejoined Emmeline.

"Yes," said Grace Spencer; "I have a light. He certainly has it in name, I should say. Has it not something to do with the post-office?"

"Oh, I guess!" exclaimed her sister: "Charlemagne was one."

"It *must* be *Frank*!" remarked Miss Wall.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" said Frederick.

While the boating party were thus engaged in games and merry conversation, the equestrians diverged into a lane, between high banks, overshadowed with trees.

The Arab had hitherto gone very quietly, especially on their way out, but returning, although by a different road, he seemed more inclined to prick his ears and start.

"I would not leave the curb quite so loose. I suppose you have always ridden upon the snaffle?"

"Yes; my uncle used to tell me to do so."

"But with an Arab it is different," rejoined Montagu. "The Arabs themselves ride entirely upon the curb and a very severe one too; so that, although this animal's mouth is naturally light, he is so used to a tight curb, that he scarcely feels the snaffle."

Katharine took the hint; she was in high spirits, and never remembered to have felt happier. There was something in the day which inspired her with buoyancy and delight. The elastic step and smooth paces of her steed, combined with the mere pleasure of being mounted upon an animal of such extraordinary beauty, had been sufficient to excite the fancy of even a less experienced rider. In addition to all this, the most charming person she had ever met, was riding by her side and had already, in some degree, inspired her with an

interest in his history, Absorbed in his conversation, Katharine had, perhaps, through habit, again allowed her curb-rein to hang loosely upon the neck of the horse and, as they were going down a hill, the animal placed its foot upon a stone and, stumbling, touched the ground with its knees, before she could make an effort to save it.

In an instant Montagu had dismounted, but Katharine kept her seat and the Arab had recovered itself immediately. Cecil took hold of its rein and patting it on the neck said—

“How admirably you kept your seat. Any one else would have been off. I am exceedingly thankful you were not hurt.”

“I would sooner have been hurt than this had happened to your horse,” exclaimed Katharine, pale and terrified at what she had done.

“Oh! do not say so, Miss Elliot. In the East, an Arab without broken knees, is a rarity.”

"It *has* broken its knees then?" uttered Katharine, in a voice of great distress and, turning to Sir Edward, she continued—"Pray tell me, are its knees very badly cut?"

"Well! I am afraid they are, but it can't be helped. It was not your fault," replied Sir Edward.

"It was not the horse's, I am certain!" returned Katharine, "I am *very, very* sorry, but I am afraid it *must* have been mine."

"Miss Elliott, you distress me by accusing yourself so unjustly," said Montagu, who had been wiping the animal's knees with his handkerchief. "I assure you I do not think so ill of the cuts. I have seen worse knees than these completely cured and, next spring, if you are in London, you shall see it in the Park, perfectly recovered and, if, after such misbehaviour, you deign to mount it again, you shall ride it in Rotten-row, yourself."

Having re-mounted his horse, Montagu turned the conversation to other subjects and

endeavoured to lead Katharine to forget her misadventure. It was not until she saw the groom's look of consternation at the destruction of his master's favourite, that she became aware of the extent to which she had really injured it.

"Poor thing!" said Katharine, as she looked at its knees, when she had dismounted. "I am sure it is very badly cut. It bleeds terribly."

"Oh, no! The bleeding is nothing. Do not think about it. I will go and see it when the groom has fomented it and let you know how it goes on."

Katharine retired to her room in great distress and sent for her brother Frank, as soon as he returned, to tell him of her accident. He was much annoyed and spoke with such thoughtless harshness, that, when he had left her, she could not refrain from tears.

Francis, learning that Mr. Montagu was at

the stables, proceeded thither and met him on the way.

"I am exceedingly vexed at what has happened," he said. "My sister has just been telling me of her misfortune."

"I am sorry, very sorry, she told you," replied Montagu good-naturedly taking Frank's arm, "before I had been to see the real extent of the mischief. The fact is, a little hair is rubbed off, but I dare say it will be all right by and by. It was not, in the least, your sister's fault, she is a beautiful rider. The animal, no doubt, trod upon a small stone; you know, Arabs are very queer about that sort of thing; while they will be perfectly surefooted among their own native rocks, when you ride them on a smooth English road, they come down without the slightest warning, or any apparent cause. You will know more about them a few months hence, for Miss Elliott tells me you are going to travel in the

East. Now promise me *this*, will you? that you will not suppose your sister is to blame for this accident, for I can assure you it was not her fault."

"Yes; and I hope it is as you say," pursued Frank, "and yet I cannot but help regretting that she ever ventured upon riding it."

"Nay, my dear fellow, don't take it to heart in that way," returned Montagu, "I hope she will ride it again next spring, in town, if you will be her escort. It will be well by that time. I want you to come and see my house at Thornwood. Will you pay me a visit there? Let me see, when are you proposing to start for Egypt?"

"About the beginning of November, Morden was saying to-day, but I don't think it is certain."

"Well; come and see me in October, I hope to be at Thornwood on the seventh. I will give you my address and you shall write to

say when you are coming. I will ask Stobieski, who has travelled all over the East, to meet you and he will give you every kind of information."

Frank Elliott was now delighted with Cecil Montagu, who had won his heart by his cordial manner and proffered friendship.

Before dinner, he knocked at his sister's door and put her in good spirits, by relating his conversation with Montagu. She had been greatly distressed since her brother had left her, but when she perceived how completely his view of the matter had changed, she began to fancy the accident less serious than she had first imagined, but this did not prevent her feeling intense gratitude to one who had known how to give so favourable a turn to the unfortunate occurrence.

On entering the drawing-room, they were introduced to some guests whose arrival had been rather unexpected.

Mr. Seymour was a man of about fifty-five, with a pallid face and cold expression. His

wife was a well-dressed fashionable lady of fifty, with a good deal of wordy conversation about the things of the day. Their daughter, Elsie, to whom allusion has already been made, was not exactly the sort of person that Katharine had been led to fancy. She was tall and slight, with auburn hair and deep blue eyes; her features were remarkably regular, indeed Grecian in their outline; her complexion was clear and her expression, unless warmed by argument, poetry, or topics of interest, cold, almost to the extent of chilling others; and yet no one could see Elsie Seymour without feeling desirous to know more of her.

When Katharine came into the room, Elsie was engaged in talking to Montagu. Her face was animated, and her blue eyes rested upon his as if she were intensely interested in his observations. Soon after Katharine had been introduced, Cecil turned to her and said, in an under tone—

"The horse is going on favourably, and I have no doubt that it will be in excellent condition again in a few weeks. So pray do me the kindness, Miss Elliott, to forget the thing altogether."

After dinner there was music in the saloon. Elsie was a beautiful singer, and Montagu was persuaded to join in a duet. The two together were admirable. There was a grace and charm in all that Montagu said or did, which won the hearts of those who were not jealous of him.

"I wish, Mr. Montagu, you would sing the air you sang at Thornwood?" said Elsie, "it has haunted me ever since."

"I reserve it for Thornwood," he replied.

"And are none but the favoured few treated with it, when they visit Thornwood?" enquired Elsie.

"I have never sung it before or since *that* visit," returned Montagu.

"Am I not, by-the-bye, preventing some

one else from playing?" said Else, "there is Miss Elliott, I should think she plays—how pretty she is!"

"She certainly *is*, although I doubt whether her singing will do after what we have heard."

"I will ask her whether she plays," rejoined Elsie, in a satisfied voice.

Katharine begged to be excused an exhibition of her musical talents, as she felt herself unable to vie with Elsie.

Later in the evening Montagu said to Katharine—

"Your brother has promised to come and see me, at Thornwood, before he goes abroad. Pray remind him of it, for I am going early to-morrow and may not have an opportunity of speaking to him. Shall you be in town next spring?"

"I don't know. Our plans are very uncertain, as my mother is an invalid," returned Katharine.

"What do you think of Miss Seymour's singing?"

"It is beautiful."

"She is almost a greater favourite with women than men," said Montagu. "Some men think her *too* clever."

"She is very handsome—don't you think so?"

"Yes; there is something peculiarly striking about her. But, listen, she is going to sing again."

At Emmeline's request, she sang a song, of which the air as well as the words were her own composition.

ELSIE'S SONG.

Wilt thou hear a song of glory,
From the Islands far away,
Where the Syrens chaunt their story,
And the song-birds cull their lay?

Flee with me, at fancy's leading,
O'er the blue and golden sea,
Winds shall waft us, all unheeding,
To an isle of mirth and glee.

In this island of the ocean,
Earth and sky are bright and clear,
And the air inspires the notion,
Of a calm, unmoved by fear.

Every breeze is sweet with myrtle,
Fragrance perfumes all the land,
While the nightingale and turtle,
Chaunt their music by each strand.

'Tis an Island, filled with roses,
And with rivulets of love !
In each cave a nymph reposes,
Shepherds wander through each grove.

All its maids are free from sadness,
And its sons are pure from guile,
Which convinces me 'tis madness,
To believe in such an isle !

'Tis an Island, I've a notion,
Very, very, far away,
You might navigate the ocean,
And not find it many a-day.

"How do you like the song?" asked Montagu.

"The music is pretty, but, altogether, it is rather peculiar and quaint, I think."

"It is," he returned, "but not more so than its author. I was a long time before I could understand her at all."

Upon the whole, that evening left an agreeable impression on Katharine's mind, and Montagu's image became more distinct in her memories and her day-dreams.

When she came down, in the morning, he was gone.

BOOK II.



L I L E.



CHAPTER I.

THE VILLAGE OF CAWTHORNE.

CAWTHORNE COURT was a mansion of the Tudor times, situated in the vale of Berkeley, in Gloucestershire. The village lay close at hand, on one side of the manor-house, while the deer-park, with its fine elms, extended on the other. The church stood near the house and the school and parsonage were on the opposite side of the road. The cottage gardens were unusually neat and, even at that late season, gay with flowers. The orchards were laden with

pears and apples, a heap of which had been piled against the wall of the cider-mill, where they perfumed the air with their fragrance.

The Court was almost hidden from the village, as the intervening church-yard was girt with tall evergreens, but its chimneys and gables were visible from more than one point along the road.

Not far from the school, stood a single cottage, distinguished for the tidiest and brightest garden in the village. It was half-timbered, but its walls were almost concealed by roses and creepers. The tiled roof overhung the projecting rafters and a new ornamental chimney seemed to bespeak a landlord possessing some taste for the picturesque. The garden was enclosed by a box hedge and a wicket-gate and the cottage overshadowed by a tall pear tree, while some apple and cherry trees were dispersed about the garden.

Somewhere about the hour of five in the afternoon of a September day, a little knot of

children were playing upon a patch of turf fronting the cottage, and while they were thus engaged, a robust and healthy young woman, with a handsome sun-burnt face, came out of the cottage and, running to the gate, called two children from the group.

“Come, Nancy, now, don’t go messing there, or I’ll give it you well ; and bring Bill along with you. Now, George Bailis, if you make a mess of our Bill I’ll tell your father of you. Leave the child alone ! Have done with you !” she said, coming among the little party, and slapping the children right and left, until she had rescued those of whom she was in quest, dragging them triumphantly to the cottage door ; for it was their tea-time.

The cottage was inhabited by a couple in the decline of life. John Dolby was eighty, and his wife near upon seventy. Their sons and daughters had, for the most part, married or died. A favourite son had enlisted, and for

many a long year they had not heard of him. Of their daughters, one had been in service at Cawthorne Court and had ended by marrying a groom, with whom she went to live in London, where he had been offered work. Their affairs not prospering, the man took to drinking, and his wife, after undergoing much suffering, died, leaving an only daughter, whom her husband, Richard Elton, by name, brought down to his father-in-law's, at Cawthorne, promising to send remittances for her support. These never came and a rumour reached them that he had died of drinking. John and Sally Dolby brought up Phoebe Elton, their grandchild, with a view to sending her into service, but as their age and infirmities increased, they required her assistance, as well for themselves as for the two little children, confided to their care.

For many years Sally had kept her youngest daughter Ann at home. This Ann Dolby was

a very pretty girl : “dark like Phœbe,” Sally was wont to say, “but much kindlier and taller.”

There never was such another, according to her account. Poor old John had doted upon this daughter. She was the child of their old age and had lived with them, managing everything, for many years. Ann was at home when Phœbe came to live at Cawthorne, and for a long time after. She was generally considered a respectable, tidy girl, notwithstanding her good-looks which were, perhaps, to her disadvantage. The Vicar, old Mr. Drislow, had a good opinion of her, and his wife often employed her at the vicarage for a day’s needlework. As poor Sally said—

“Nobody was ever heard to speak against the girl, nor could they if they would, until that business of Mary Fawcett’s asking her to go along with her to Cheltenham. She would’nt tell me what it was for. That was a sly, good-for-nothing creature, was *that* Mary

Fawcett, a telling we that she wanted our Ann to go and help her missus for a few days, while she was obliged to be away, and offering her some wages for it. Yes; we know what the wages of sin is, don't we John? They be death, and nothing else sure enough! Well, when she got to Cheltenham she fell in with bad company, and then, the Almighty knows all the mischief was done! She stayed awhile with Mary's missus, I suppose, and then she came home, but it warn't for long. She was quite changed; I could see it. She warn't no longer the same hard-working, tidy girl. She was become a grand lady, reading books and writing letters like a schollard, and for no good I'll warrant! I spoke to her, but I was afraid when I saw the way she took on. But it did not mend her. Her changed ways was the talk of all the parish at last, and got to the ears of Parson Drislow, who came and held on about it. Old John took on then when he saw the parson come and rate in our house and

so he speaks to our Ann and she never answered a word; but, sure enough, she slipped away that night, and we never saw her again; she went to Cheltenham, I believe, and I *have* heard say she married some one in foreign parts, where these two children was born. I knows that when Mr. Herbert, God bless him, found her in distress, and got her into the Penitentiary, he brought these two children to us, and pays us for their keep."

Such was the story which old Sally would repeat in confidence and this will sufficiently explain the parentage of the two children rescued by Phœbe Elton from among the group of their little school-fellows, in order to give them their tea in the cottage.

The cottage door was partly open and notwithstanding the mildness of the day, a fire was kindled in the grate and old Dolby, seated in his arm-chair in a corner of the open chimney, was leaning upon his crutch, so as to imbibe as much heat as he possibly could. His

wife, in her prim old-fashioned cap, sat at an oak table in front of the window, with the cups and teapot before her, all ready for tea. Her eye wandered backwards and forwards from the table to her poor old rheumatic husband, in his white smock. Whenever she perceived a speck upon her well-rubbed board, she would fidget from her chair and wipe it with her clean apron or her sleeve. Everything in the room bespoke the tidiness of old Sally. The shelves against the wall glistened with white crockery, which she had possessed time out of mind. Upon the high mantel-piece were some polished brass candlesticks and overhead, suspended from the beams of the ceiling, a fitch of bacon. In the window-shelf were a few well-worn books, for although, as Sally would say, "Old John was no schollard," yet she could read pretty decently in her way, and would often get through a chapter of the Bible in an afternoon.

"Come along, Phœbe, with them children,"

said old Sally ; " I told you not to let them go messing after school-time in the lane. You ought to be by when they comes out of school and bring them home. Don't you see your grandfather's a waiting for his tea ? It isn't right he should be kept in this manner, that it aynt."

"It was but just gone five when I went out," returned the girl.

"Don't tell me, for I know better," retorted the old woman. "You were hanging them things to dry a good bit after I heard it go five by the stable clock ;" (for although there was an old time-piece in the cottage, it was her custom to keep it so much in advance of the real hour that she could never remember the exact difference.) "Now come along, and set them children and keep them from making such a clatter."

While the party were seated at their evening meal, old Sally heard the falling of the latch of the garden-gate.

"Here's folks a coming, I declare," said she: "who might it be, I wonder?"

"May be the parson, or young Master Lisle, more like," conjectured John Dolby.

"Nay it baint—it be Master Perdon," exclaimed Sally, as the village schoolmaster, a demure, respectable young man of thirty, knocked at the half-open door and looked in as if afraid to intrude.

"Come in, Master Perdon," continued the old woman: "come in and take a cup of tea along with we."

The young man gladly accepted her invitation and, having shaken hands with old John and Sally and given a look of recognition at Phœbe, took the chair which the latter offered him.

"May be you won't find it much to your taste?" pursued Sally. "It ayn't so strong as some folks like it. We doesn't take it strong and never did. But the tea ayn't bad tea, nevertheless."

"It is quite as I like it, I assure you," replied Mr. Perdon, who, being fond of children, had turned round to pat the two little ones upon the head.

"I hope they came home tidily from school?" he said.

"Nay," returned Sally, "I was just a saying before you came, that Phoebe ought to go and fetch them as soon as school be over. But she was out hanging clothes, or somewhat, when 'twas their time; and then they messes in the lane along with all them other children."

William Perdon gave a glance at Phoebe, who was bending down her head, and could not help defending her.

"Most likely it was not any one's fault but mine to-day," said he; "for I broke up school before the time, as Mr. Herbert Lisle came in to speak to me."

"She might have been on the look out," grumbled Old Sally.

"Another day I'll send Lucy Carter with

them to the gate and that will save her the trouble," rejoined William Perdon, who received a gracious look of thanks from the beautiful eyes of the girl, which more than rewarded him for his offer.

"Well, Mrs. Dolby," continued the school-master, after a long pause, during which he had been summoning up courage for the effort, "I spoke to Mr. Herbert Lisle about—about what we were talking of the other day—of sending Phœbe—that is, if she likes to go, you know—to the training-school. I know he wants to send some one from this parish, and I said to him, 'surely no-one can be better fitted for it than Phœbe, who has passed the examinations and been a pupil-teacher and was always first in the school.'"

All this while William Perdon kept his eyes upon the table and did not dare to raise them to look at Phœbe's pretty face, being in doubt lest his words might not entirely meet her approval.

"Well," says Sally, "and what did Master Herbert say? Did you tell him as he's welcome to take our Phœbe, if he'll find us another for the children. We are too old to look after them children ourselves and that's the fact."

"Yes, I told him—but that was *his* difficulty too; he said he should come and talk to you about it. But if I may be so bold, I want to ask Phœbe whether she will go to the training school if all be arranged?"

"Oh! I'll be bound she will!" exclaimed old Sally.

But Phœbe's coquettish look escaped her observation and only fell upon poor William Perdon, who was dreaming of the day when, as school-mistress of Cawthorne, she might consent to become his wife.

"Ye will; won't ye, Phœbe?"

"Well, grandmother, not if you can't get some-one else for the children."

"May be we'll find another to mind them,"

said the old woman ; “and I’m sure you ought to be thankful for Master Lisle a thinking of sending you. It ayn’t for nothing that’s done. Why, you’ll be well to do and a grand scholar ! I’m sure you ought to be uncommon thankful to the gentleman, God bless ’un.”

Phœbe declared that she was very grateful, but her tone did not satisfy the school-master’s more attentive ear. He fixed his eyes imploringly upon her, but she turned away and, having collected the tea-things, and washed them, betook herself to her needle-work.

After a few more words with Sally and a promise to come and read to old John on Sunday afternoon, Perdon bade them good night and, as he shook Phœbe by the hand, said, in a low voice—

“Don’t think amiss of me, if I have said anything to displease you. It was not intended—I can vouch for *that*—you can trust me.”

This was spoken so earnestly and kindly that it smote poor Phoebe to the heart.

William Perdon had been appointed school-master at Cawthorne only three years before. The village school had existed for half a century, but, under the inefficient pastoral sway of Mr. Drislow, had sunk into a state of stagnation. The old master's incapacity was so apparent that Herbert Lisle, having obtained his father's consent, was about to make an urgent appeal to the vicar upon the subject, when he was spared all further anxiety by the death of the superannuated pedagogue. Through Herbert's exertions, he was replaced by Perdon, who had been educated at one of the best training-colleges, bringing also good recommendations from schools where he had already taught. Nothing could be more satisfactory than his commencement and, even the vicar and his wife, who were strongly prejudiced against the new-fashioned education, became high in their praises of the present master. He

had none of that prim conceit which unfortunately distinguishes a few of his species and his plan was rather to infuse new spirit into the old system, than to remodel everything upon a theory of his own. There was, however, one defect in this otherwise well arranged school. In former days, the wife of the master, although no scholar, helped to eke out the hours of schooling by teaching the girls to sew and the boys to knit. This was an unquestionable advantage to the girls, whatever it may have been to the boys. Now, there was, unfortunately, no school-mistress and the parents might fairly complain that their daughters learnt little or nothing which would be of service to them in after life. Herbert Lisle had been anxious to remedy this defect, but his father objected to building an additional house, or subscribing anything more to the school, to which he considered he had sufficiently contributed. The only chance would be for the master to marry a girl who

had passed through a training college and was fitted to act as school-mistress.

When Perdon first came to Cawthorne, the proportion of girls to boys was unusually great, but, after he had been there three years, the state of things was reversed, owing to the want of a mistress. The new master found Phœbe Elton at the head of the school, having been employed by his predecessor as a monitor, or rather as an assistant teacher. It was cheering, amid many discouragements, to find one who could thoroughly understand his instructions. Phœbe was encouraged, by him, to persevere until she had obtained the distinction of a pupil-teachership and qualified herself for entering a training-college. Under these circumstances and, seeing that both Herbert Lisle and Perdon felt deeply the want of a school-mistress and understood the means by which alone that deficiency could be supplied, it will not appear extraordinary that the former was willing to make an effort

to send Phœbe to the training-college, or that William had gradually accustomed himself to contemplate the possibility and advantages of a marriage with the handsome village maiden.

Nor was the matter less obvious to Phœbe herself. She had learnt to appreciate her instructor and might have arrived at loving him, but for the intervention of another feeling; a first, absorbing passion of the heart, which she could not, or dared not, overcome.

Phœbe was a girl of good disposition and full of gratitude to those who had shewn her kindness. Nothing could be deeper than her affection for her old grandparents, or exceed the warmth of her acknowledgment of the benefits conferred by her kind instructor.

The conflict between her gratitude towards Perdon and the unhappy passion by which she was swayed, caused her tears to flow when she found herself alone in the garden, after the school-master's departure.

She drew out a note which, although she

had read it frequently before, she was tempted to re-peruse. She pressed it to her lips, and then slowly pondered the contents. It ran thus:—

“After all you said to me on Sunday, I cannot doubt your love for me, my beloved Phœbe; and yet, I cannot understand your fighting shy of meeting me. Are not such scruples a mockery of love? Trust is the essence of true love, as poets would say, and, if you were partial to me, you should trust me implicitly. You know, dearest Phœbe, how entirely I confide in you! I have told you so a hundred times and I have proved it to you by my continued devotion. You spoke of the difference of rank between us as a danger. Why! does not that very difference prove my devotion? I prefer you to all the great ladies in the world and I give up all else for you and your affection. I cannot come out stronger in a letter; but I want to see you again. Meet

me, if possible, to-morrow evening, in Hollow Lane, under Turnley Wood. I will be there at seven o'clock and no mistake, and will remain till eight. Be there at any risk! I *must* see you.

"Adieu—farewell, my dearest Phœbe!

"Yours most devotedly,

"A. T. J."

"*Winfield,*

Tuesday."

She read and re-read the note. It was addressed to—"Miss Phœbe Elton, Cawthorne" and had been brought by a boy, who had been ordered to watch near the garden-gate and not to deliver it until she came out of the cottage. He had accomplished his errand on the previous evening and the "to-morrow" to

which it referred was that very day. She had made up her mind to keep the appointment and, at whatever risk, to meet her admirer, but, while yielding to the temptation, she persuaded herself that she was vainly endeavouring to combat it; whereas her own will alone blocked up the "way of escape." It is true that she frequently hesitated, but then hastened to strengthen her resolution by fresh thoughts of her lover.

It was already late and the appointed meeting-place being at some distance, she could no longer delay.

"After all," she thought, "the other girls in the village have their sweethearts, why should not I? Besides, I shall take good care not to be seen with him until he has promised me marriage."

She compelled herself to go forth, although her heart faltered and she almost longed to stay. Nevertheless, she did violence to her better feelings and went.

"Grandmother," she said to old Sally, "I am going across to Mrs. Welbourne's with these things I have mended. They were to be returned to-night, as she wants them early to-morrow morning for the wash."

In her bonnet and plaid shawl she set out in the dusk of the September evening, towards the place of her appointed meeting. She passed the cottage of Mrs. Welbourne, the village washerwoman, but, knowing that her daughter Lucy might offer to walk home with her and that the mother might endeavour to detain her for a bit of chat, she hesitated to go in with the clothes. She opened the wicket-gate very gently and lingered for a few moments in the porch, unresolved what to do. The walk was long to Hollow Lane and it was already late. It suddenly occurred to her that she might leave the clothes upon one of the seats of the porch, where they would doubtless be safe until the morning, when Mrs. Welbourne could not fail to find them and when

she could call and account for what she had done, by pleading the lateness of the hour. So one deceit led to another. She left the clothes and hurried away. In the lane she observed two boys, who she fancied might have been watching her, but when she looked at them, they turned away and walked on, whistling. She took the younger of them for George Wales—the most mischievous young fellow of his age in the parish. When first she saw the lads, she was in momentary fear for the safety of the clothes; but as she perceived that they turned another way, she felt reassured.

Walking at a brisk pace, she at length reached Hollow Lane—a narrow road between high banks and overshadowed by the oaks of Turnley Wood. Her heart beat as she found herself approaching the appointed spot. More than once a regret crossed her mind and there was a strong contention within, between her sense of right and her self-will. There was yet time to escape; why should she not flee

the temptation? Her wilfulness prevailed and, in another moment, it was too late.

Upon turning the next corner, she found herself in the presence of her lover, a young lawyer's clerk at Winfield, tall and handsome and with manners which passed for engaging in his own circle, whose name was Alfred Thomas Johnson.

Whatever may have been his vulgarities, they were imperceptible to the simple-minded village maiden, who was well persuaded that his slang was the language of a high-bred gentleman and his manners were those of a courtier.

"Well, Phœbe," said he, "I am precious glad you are come at last. I've been smoking a weed to pass the time. I rather thought you'd cut me. Eh? That isn't it, is it, Phœbe? You got my letter, I suppose?"

"Yes, but I couldn't get away sooner. It is a longer walk than I thought."

"I'm glad you're come, my beauty! I wanted to see you. I have something to say

about what we were talking of last time ; I have been thinking of it. You must trust me till I can get my old gov'ner to consent to our marrying. The old boy is a rummy old chap about that sort of thing. I almost believe he'd go mad, or hang himself, or something, if I didn't marry a great lady. He takes on so about it. He thinks nothing too good for me."

"You said you would write to him. What does he say?"

"Well, I sounded him. I sent him a feeler, but he don't bite. I'm afraid it's no go. Not at present, that is."

"But we can wait ; I will give you my promise to love no one else."

"That wouldn't do. Phœbe, my precious, we must circumvent him another way ! Don't you see the old boy won't rest till he makes me marry one of his grand ladies ? He is always at me. He says he won't leave me a shilling (and he is well to do) unless I marry where he likes. I don't care for his money ; but I don't

see how I'm to marry you at all unless I do it now."

"I'm thinking, Mr. Alfred, that I oughtn't to marry you if your father does not consent. It can't be right for you to hide it from your father. If you speak to him, and tell him that you want to marry a young woman and that you love her and that you never will consent to marry anybody else but her; and *then*, if he won't consent, we can wait and keep true to each other. He *may* give in at last, or we may wait until he dies. I'm sure I'll be true. I never can, or will love anybody else."

The lover was not satisfied with her promises of constancy, but urged his appeal more strongly, using every argument which came into his head to induce her to dispense with a public marriage. Notwithstanding all the sophistry which he employed, he found it a far more difficult task than he had expected to delude her simple mind. After he had vainly

endeavoured to clothe his plot in a virtuous disguise, by promising a public ratification in church at some future time, she innocently remarked :—

“Mr. Alfred, but I don’t quite see why you don’t marry me in church. We could be married by licence, I think they call it, and no one be the wiser.”

“And don’t you think the old ’un would hear of it? He isn’t to be caught in that way. He is wide awake—the old ’un is. Have you never heard of the ‘London Gazette?’ The marriages are not all reported there? Oh, no, not at all.”

The poor girl had never heard whether they were, or were not, reported in the “London Gazette” and was therefore unable to convict him of falsehood. She had been brought up with a due regard to the sacred character of marriage and feeling a strong suspicion of her danger, an unknown terror seemed to seize her. She doubted her lover and regretted having

placed herself in his power, or, at all events, in the dilemma of either accepting or rejecting him for ever. Under these circumstances she unlocked her hand from his grasp and burst into a flood of tears. The moon had risen and shed its silvery light through the branches of the oaks which overhung the lane. That glorious September moon were worthy of some happier meeting, such as when Lorenzo and Jessica recalled the love-nights of old. Its light was less congenial to the passion of Mr. Alfred Johnson, who stood perplexed at the turn which matters had taken. He felt that he did not quite know what to say or do. At last he summoned up courage and seized the hand which she had withdrawn, intending to expostulate with her, but such was her terror, that she sobbed the more.

Enjoying that same clear night, as he returned from Winfield, whither he had been upon some errand since he left old Dolby's cottage, was William Perdon, the schoolmaster.

The windings of the narrow lane had concealed him from the lovers until he came upon them and then Johnson was the first to perceive him, but without knowing him. He felt vexed at being caught with a sobbing girl and his first impulse was to give warning to Phœbe, for which purpose he suddenly seized her wrist. Alarmed by the unexpected grasp and not being aware of its object, she uttered a scream, saying —

“Don’t! Let me go!”

Perdon heard and recognised her voice and figure.

“Phœbe! Phœbe! Is that you?” he said.

“Yes! save me!” she cried, and running towards him, fell senseless in his arms. She had been worked up to an unnatural pitch of excitement and feeling her arm violently seized, was terrified beyond measure. The sudden revulsion upon finding herself in the presence of the man whose honest love she

had forsworn for the guilty passion of Johnson, was too much for her and she swooned away.

"Have you insulted this girl?" enquired Perdon resolutely, of the other who stood by in a state of consternation.

"Oh! law no! No—it was nothing of that sort! The girl will tell you—"

"May I ask what you were doing here? In the name of her relations—her old grandfather—I have a right to know why you were alone with her in this lane at such an hour?"

"It is all right, sir, and no mistake!" said Johnson, who was beginning to recover from his first terror, and to transform himself from the coward into the bully. "I don't see what right any man has to go between me and the object of my affections. If we were having a bit of a lover's quarrel—*amantium iræ, amoris integratio est*—as we used to have it at—at college, in fact. But, I forgot; you probably

don't understand Latin or Greek. Beg your pardon for the quotation! But what right has any man to interfere between lovers?"

"The girl appealed to me and I will know the reason why. There is a stream down yonder; fetch me some water in your hat to throw upon her face!"

"Law mercy! my hat! don't you see I'm sporting a new tile? Give us your own, old chap. *It* won't rust with damp."

Perdon gave his own hat without a word's reply and, while Johnson went to fetch water from the stream, spread his coat upon the ground and, placing Phœbe upon it, proceeded to rub her feet and hands. The water thrown upon her temples speedily revived her. She looked up at Perdon and, thanking him, said—

"Save me! save me from—from—*him*."

Johnson heard the words and, offering to bring more water in his own hat, slunk away, and did not re-appear.

CHAPTER II.

CAWTHORNE COURT.

PHOEBE revived from her swoon and, leaning upon Perdon's arm, walked slowly towards Cawthorne. They conversed but little on the road, for William would not question, or reproach, her and she was too confused with grief and terror to say anything to him. Once or twice he encouraged her with a kind word, softly spoken, but, otherwise, they pursued their way in silence.

It was very late when they reached the

village and, on arriving at the cottage-gate, William asked her whether she should find the door unlocked.

"I have the key," she said; "I expect grandmother will be gone to bed."

"I see no light," replied Perdon. "But—but—I was going to say—if your grandmother is likely to be up—I would go in with you, if *you* liked, Phœbe—and, tell her, that you had been a little walk, and that we had met, and that you had fainted from sudden terror, or fatigue—and that I had taken the liberty of bringing you home."

This story, which the kind-hearted school-master had invented as he came along, was stammered out with the hesitation of one unaccustomed to any kind of deception, and which he, perhaps, felt to be a bad lesson to instil into his former pupil.

"No—oh no! thank you, Mr. Perdon! Grandmother is sure to be gone to bed. She thinks I have been at Mrs. Welbourne's. I


did go *there*—that is, to the door, first. Oh, Mr. Perdon ! I have been a very, very silly girl—very !”

And she burst into tears as she wished him good night.

He waited until he saw her enter the door and close it behind her.

He retired, to pass a restless night, and ponder upon what seemed a terrible blow to his prospects. For months the notion of his marriage with Phœbe had been his day-dream and his studious mind found relaxation in framing visions of the happiness which might be in store for them. He reflected upon her docile character and pictured her thoughtful gaze fixed upon him, while he endeavoured to train her tastes and influence her opinions, fashioning them to the aspirations of his own heart.

Imaginative minds are sometimes tyrannical, and love better where they can control, while the student requires to be understood as well as



worshipped. It seemed to Perdon that Phœbe would supply these requirements of his nature. Upon this foundation he had reared fair castles in the air which had crumbled to dust. Phœbe, the intelligent and thoughtful girl, had proved capable of deceit and, perhaps, of sin; and, what, to him, was equally terrible, incapable of returning his love. He thought, again and again, of the scene he had witnessed, endeavouring to draw consolation from Johnson's replies to his questions and from the fact of Phœbe's having appealed to him for help. But then he remembered, too, the walk home and her repentant sobs! and so tossed uneasily in his bed, awaiting the morning dawn and the recommencement of his toil.

He was preparing some copies before the children assembled in school. The hour had not struck when Thomas Fairfield came rushing in and, perceiving that Perdon was there, halted, pulled off his cap and muttered a good morning.

"What is the matter, Fairfield?" enquired the schoolmaster; "you come running in as if you were late. There's no hurry—you should not heat yourself in that way before school."

"Please, sir, there's been robbers in the village, sir! father is constable, sir, and he's been up at the Court, at Mr. Lisle's. And Phoebe Elton, she's to be had up; and they are in a great way down at Mrs. Welbourne's."

"What! what is it, my boy? Who has been robbed?"

"Please, sir, Mrs. Welbourne has lost some clothes she was to wash; Phoebe Elton had 'em to mend and Mrs. Welbourne says she've stolen 'em; but Phoebe swears to having brought 'em back to Mrs. Welbourne's door; that's what father says. But he thinks Phoebe must make 'em good. And Mrs. Welbourne have been up to Mr. Lisle, and they says Phoebe will have to be taken up, as she can't prove to not having the things."

William Perdon scarce waited to hear the end, but hurried off as fast as he could to Dolby's cottage, as it still wanted some minutes to school-time.

"Well, here's a bad business, Master Perdon," said old Dolby when he saw the schoolmaster.

"Ay! *That* it is!" pursued Sally; "A bad job for we, and what's to be done, I can't tell? you see, they say our Phœbe 'll have to go to prison. She 've had these things by her, a mending for Mrs. Welbourne, and declares she took 'em back last night and laid 'em in the porch. She was long enough away, the Almighty knows. I fear she was about no good. She has told me of it, and how that she 've been keeping company with a young man from Winfield, unknown to we. Howsoever she seems quite cut up about it now and promises she will never see him again. *He* was a good-for-nothing chap, I dare swear. No harm's come of it, thank the

Almighty ! She 've told me all about it, and how you brought her home last night, Master Perdon, and thanks to ye for it."

"I have no doubt that Phœbe took the clothes and laid them under Mrs. Welbourne's porch. Somebody else must have stolen them, but I fear the value must be paid back to Mrs. Welbourne. That would satisfy her I should think !"

"No ;— she won't have nothing less than the things, she says—the old spiteful creature, she hates Phœbe and we, because Mr. Herbert and they, she says, don't do so much for her; a hearty well-to-do woman that she is, and we poor creeturs on our last legs. She says she don't know the value of the clothes and swears that, if she don't have 'em back, our Phœbe shall go to prison."

"Where is Phœbe?"

"Oh ! she be gone to Mr. Lisle's along with Master Fairfield the constable."

"I 'll go there !"—And without further

delay poor William hastened off to Cawthorne Court and obtained admittance into the study where the elder Mr. Lisle was wont to administer justice. On this occasion the old gentleman had delegated the duty to his son Herbert, who was listening attentively to the statements made by Mrs. Welbourne and the constable.

"And what have you to say for yourself Phœbe Elton?" he enquired in a kind tone, while looking at the paper upon which he had written his notes.

"Sir, I had the clothes to mend," replied Phœbe; "and, last night I took them home to Welbourne's cottage and—and left them under the porch, and went away."

"What do you mean? Why did not you deliver them to Martha Welbourne?"

"Yes sir," put in the ferocious Welbourne, a sour looking old washerwoman: "That's what I say! Why did not she give 'em up if she hadn't stolen 'em herself?"

"Pray be silent, if you please Mrs. Welbourne, I am now speaking to Phœbe Elton. It is not your turn. I want to know why you did not go into the cottage and give up the clothes to Mrs. Welbourne?"

"Sir—I don't like to say," said Phœbe bursting into tears.

"Come, you must answer the gentleman," urged the constable.

"It is a simple question," pursued Herbert: "had you some reason for not going into Mrs. Welbourne's cottage?"

"Yes sir; I was keeping company with a young man and was going to meet him"—

Upon hearing this, Perdon, who had been in the room some minutes, came forward towards Herbert, as if he wished to explain something in private.

"I suppose," said Lisle; "that Mr. Perdon was the young man?"

"Yes sir," said Perdon before Phœbe could

reply : "I met her down in Hollow Lane, and came home with her afterwards."

"The schoolmaster abroad, eh?" asked Herbert smiling. The constable chuckled and even Mrs Welbourne relaxed into a slight smile.

"And I think sir," said Perdon; "if you'll allow me, I can vouch to Phœbe's having kept to the same story, for she told her grandmother that the clothes were left last night under Mrs. Welbourne's porch."

"Did you see any one in the lanes last night, while you were wandering out so late?" enquired Lisle of Perdon.

"I did, sir!—" put in Phœbe, "I saw two boys in the lane, close by Martha Welbourne's gate. I almost thought they watched me."

"Who were they? Did you know their faces?"

"Yes sir, I think one of them was George Wales."

"Ah ! It's like enough he did it," said the constable, "*he's* a reg'lar bad un', *he* is."

"And who was the other boy ?" enquired Lisle.

"I did not know the other."

"Now, what I want to know, Martha Welbourne, is this ; did you never tell Phœbe Elton, or others whom you employed, to mend clothes, that they might leave them under the porch ? Tell me, didn't you leave clothes hanging out in your garden at times ?"

"Well, sir, I may have done *that* once or twice, perhaps,, and I may have told Eliza Sheers or some of *them* to leave the things under the porch when I have chanced to be out, of days ; but *that* was daylight, not after night fall. Never did such a thing, at night, never !"

"And pray what do you suppose might have been the value of the goods you have lost ?"

"Oh! I can't tell sir, I'm sure; they're worth a good site of money to them as has lost 'em."

"You can tell me, I suppose, how many articles there were, and of what kind?"

"Well, I can't exactly say which *was* the things I gave to Eliza Sheers and which to Phœbe Elton, but I think—"

"What! you don't mean to say that you kept no account of what you gave out?"

"Well—sir—I can't exactly, but *you* oughts to know Phœbe—tell the gentleman, Mr. Lisle, what it was as I gave ye, can't ye?" continued Martha, addressing Phœbe in rather a pettish tone.

"Yes," said Phœbe, "you gave me a couple of shirts and—"

"Shirts, did I? then them was Master Perdon's."

"And a night-shirt and some stockings, and—"

"Them's his'n as well, I *do* believe."

"And a petticoat.

"That warn't his'n, that must have been—let me see? I shouldn't wonder but *that* was Mrs. Green's at Enshott Farm."

"Was that all"? enquired Herbert.

"Yes, sir; those were all the things that I mended."

"The greater part of them seem to have been the property of Perdon."

"Well sir, I don't intend to reclaim them from Mrs. Welbourne and, as to the petticoat," continued the schoolmaster, "I shall be happy to buy Mrs. Green a new one."

"Wait a bit if you please, Mr. Perdon—it strikes me that *that* would be something like compounding a felony," said Lisle. "No! this matter must be enquired into, but I don't see any ground for issuing a warrant against Phœbe Elton. She may probably be required as a witness if the thieves are found. I must say that it was highly repre-

hensible in you, Phœbe Elton, to leave the clothes in so unsafe a place. You may certainly be held responsible for them. They were committed to your care and you tacitly undertook to restore them safely to Martha Welbourne. I am very sorry that you should have been guilty of such carelessness, for carelessness it certainly was, since I cannot suppose it to have been anything worse, and I trust Mrs. Welbourne will see the matter in the same light."

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Welbourne, "if so be that Master Perdon holds himself bound for Mrs. Green's petticoat?"

"Mr. Perdon has nothing to do with Mrs. Green's petticoat," replied Lisle smiling, "it is Phœbe Elton whom you must hold responsible."

"Yes, sir— but I may make myself responsible for it to Martha Welbourne I suppose, if I choose. *She* understands that," returned Perdon.

"Yes—yes," interrupted Lisle, "but I have nothing to do with your private arrangements. And now, Fairfield, take this note to police-constable Walsh, at Winfield, immediately, tell him I hope to hear from him this evening. There is nothing more to be done at present."

Herbert dismissed the conclave and William Perdon hurried back to his school, where he found the children as quiet as mice, but the room full of dust, the forms topsy-turvy, boys and girls in wrong places with books upside-down and all hiding their tittering faces as if pretending to be absorbed in study. We will leave him to pursue his work and return to the justice-room in Cawthorne-Court.

That room was situated on the ground-floor in a retired corner of the house and was accessible from without, by means of a garden-door opening into a path overshadowed by trees and leading to the village. Its diamond-paned window looked out upon a thicket

of evergreens, so that, even in summer, with the casement opened to its full width, the room was sufficiently obscure, but upon a winter's day, when the window was closed and old Mr. Lisle in the chair, the blindfolded goddess had her perfect sway.

After the departure of Phœbe and Perdon, Herbert spoke a few words to Martha Welbourne.

"I am very sorry for what has happened," said he, "but I don't think you can lay all the blame to Phœbe Elton, if you yourself told Eliza Sheers that she might leave clothes under the porch in your absence. I will take care, however, that you shall not suffer by this. I shall probably see Mrs. Green at Enshott this afternoon and I will explain the circumstances to her. Besides, it is possible we may still recover the things. Mind you keep the matter quiet until we see what can be done."

It was nearly ten o'clock when Herbert appeared in the dining-room and excused himself for his lateness.

It was a long, low, wainscotted room, with an old mantelpiece of richly carved oak in the centre, a series of family pictures of stiff and starch-looking Lisles on the walls and four casemented windows overlooking the lawn.

The breakfast party consisted of Mr. Lisle, an old man of seventy-five, whose face retained traces of its former good looks while his bent frame and general appearance bespoke a gradually declining constitution; Laura Lisle, whom we have already mentioned, and her brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Baring. Mrs. Baring, formerly Mary Lisle, was prettier than her sister Laura and of fairer complexion. It was six years since she had married the rector of a parish in Wiltshire, a thin fair-haired man in the prime of life, of a mild and interesting countenance. He had

brought his wife and children to Cawthorne, where he was to leave them for change of air, while he returned to his parochial duties.

"I hear you have been dispensing justice," said Baring.

"What was it all about?" enquired Mr. Lisle, "Gillett came to me with a long story about Mrs. Welbourne's clothes having been stolen and something about old Dolby's grand-daughter, but I could neither make head nor tail of what he said. I hope the girl is not implicated in the matter?"

"What girl? you don't mean Phœbe Elton. She can't have been suspected!" exclaimed Laura.

"It is rather an awkward story. It seems that Mrs. Welbourne had given Phœbe some clothes to mend," replied Herbert, "and that last night, the girl took them back, but being in a hurry, left them under Mrs. Welbourne's porch instead of delivering them safely into her hands.—This is Phœbe's own account of

the matter. When Mrs. Welbourne opened her door this morning the parcel was not there and she sent to Dolby's for the things as they are wanted to-day. On hearing Phœbe's story she was in a towering passion, and went off to Fairfield the constable, who came and told me. I have no reason to doubt what the girl says, for it is confirmed in some degree by the schoolmaster Perdon."

"Ay—It is an uncommonly awkward story," returned Mr. Lisle: "what business had the girl to leave the parcel outside the cottage? at night too! It's monstrous, I declare, I don't wonder at Mrs. Welbourne's suspecting her of something wrong."

"And what reason does the girl give for leaving the things in such a place?" enquired Baring.

"She had an appointment with the young man with whom she is keeping company!" replied Herbert laughing.

"What!" exclaimed Laura, looking grave

amid the general smile, "you don't mean to say that Phœbe Elton gave such a reason as that?"

"And who is the happy swain?" asked Baring.

"The worthy schoolmaster. He came and confessed to being abroad last night," answered Herbert.

"I don't see that this mends matters a bit," growled Mr. Lisle. "What! then the girl says she left the parcel under the porch, in order to be in time for her appointment with the schoolmaster Perdon? A mighty fine story! I take it she is liable for the goods, at any rate, and I don't quite see upon what evidence you'll clear her from the charge of felony, or embezzlement. Pray, at what amount did Welbourne value the goods?"

"It turned out upon enquiry," said Herbert, "that all the goods, with the exception of one article, were the property of William Perdon, so the happy swain is the only suf-

ferer. That *one* article is a part of Mrs. Green's costume, which the schoolmaster declares he shall restore at his own cost !"

"But tell me, Herbert," put in Laura, "is there a chance, then, of Perdon's marrying Phoebe Elton? It would be a capital thing, but I din't suppose she would fancy him."

"This is the first intimation I have had of their courtship," rejoined Herbert. "Much as I wished it, I have always had the same impression as you about it. I never was better pleased !"

"Ay ! And then you'll be wanting a girl's school built and what-not, I suppose !" said Mr. Lisle.

"It would be highly desirable, I should think," urged Edward Baring.

"So you all say ! it's the fashion now-a-days, but I don't believe that they are a bit the better for being crammed with a smattering of learning. However, we shall see what's

to be done. But," continued Mr. Lisle, "I hope you're not going to let the matter rest. You have set some one to work to find out more about the theft, I trust?"

"Yes; I have a clue to it I fancy and have sent for Walsh the police constable."

"That's all right."

"Supposing he succeeds in apprehending the parties this evening, will you see them, father?"

"Well, I don't mind," returned the old man who, when free from gout or other pains, was always ready for a bit of justicing. "Who are the parties you suspect?"

"Two boys—one of them is that young George Wales. You may remember, I wanted to get him into our Reformatory near Gloucester, some time back?"

"I suppose you are all eagerness to have them convicted so that you may get them into your clutches," remarked Mr. Lisle, who

continued, turning to Edward Baring : “ Herbert is brimfull of a grand scheme for reforming young thieves, and he Barford and one or two others, have been setting up a school near Gloucester, where they feed, clothe, and educate and I don’t know what besides—a whole parcel of young rag-a-muffins.”

“ Ah, yes,” replied Edward, “ I must see this school of yours, Herbert ; Barford gave me a long account of it the other day. I understand you expect to do wonders.”

After some further conversation of the kind, Herbert proposed a walk to Baring, while the ladies and Mr Lisle adjourned to the library, a room opening out of the dining-room and over-looking a broad terrace which intervened between the house and the park.

“ If you can induce Drislow to have a curate you will have gained all you can desire, at present, I should think ?” said Baring to his cousin as they were sauntering in view of

the two-storied Tudor house, with its stone oriels and gables, as they appeared, rising from among a foreground of rich foliage.

"After all, the restoration of the church is quite a secondary matter as compared with the living influence of an earnest christian pastor. It is quite true that the church has a body as well as a spirit, an outside, visible and tangible, as well as an inside, invisible and impalpable— but it often strikes me as a strange fact, in pursuing this analogy, that, while spirits can live without bodies, bodies cannot live without spirits and, although I have no sympathy with those who decry the body, or the beautiful externals of the church and her worship, yet I entirely agree in the belief that the body without the spirit is dead and, that to revive externals alone, can lead to nothing but a cold and heartless formalism."

"Yes, I entirely feel with you there," replied Herbert, "and always fancy there is

something unreal in the revival of ecclesiological details, or ecclesiastical forms, which have no bearing upon the religious requirements of our own day. Perhaps you do not follow me? For instance, in building a church, I should never think of introducing a piscina now-a-days and yet I know many instances where the architect has brought it in for the sake of satisfying his notions of archæological propriety."

"Well to say the truth, I am not much of an ecclesiologist or archæologist of any kind in the sense in which those words are used," returned Baring. "I daresay that you would think me rather a barbarian or vandal (one cannot call it a *Goth*) about *Gothic* architecture, or ecclesiology as you would call it. You must not think that I am indifferent to church revival; far from it. But I do abominate any revival which does not begin from within. The externals of worship should only be the manifes-

tation of the living principle within the heart. I admire a *lovely* face where I believe its possessor to be good, but I dislike that same face where its owner is destitute of any corresponding beauty of character. And so it is with religion. When I see a beautiful village church and know that the Eucharist is duly celebrated upon its altar, the gospel faithfully preached from its pulpit, and the flock properly watched over, *that* church I heartily admire ; but when, on the contrary, I see one of your splendid ecclesiological specimens, with piscina rood-screen, stone pulpit and a rich altar, while the sacraments are neglected, the preaching cold and formal and the flock uninstructed in the gospel of the Saviour, I tell you honestly I cannot help loathing the very architecture, the fair outside, the whited sepulchre full of dead men's bones and regarding it as a far more solemn mockery than a less ornate or more unpretending place would be."

"There is a good deal in what you say, Edward," rejoined Herbert, "but I know of

old what an unæsthetical mortal you are. You will never be brought to acknowledge that there are sermons in stones. That our old cathedrals, for instance, are so many undying expositors of christian thoughts and feelings. Why! we all know what lifeless things our cathedral establishments had, for the most part, become; what a mere routine of formal services the minor-canons and choristers were in the habit of daily performing and yet, I never attended those services without feeling the better for it and, I am certain that numbers of our countrymen and countrywomen, have been cheered by them in the midst of a cold latitudinarian age. Why! Edward, you are pleased sometimes to call me imaginative, but when I attend those cathedral services, or any church services, I simply join in what comes before me. I do not allow my imagination to dwell upon what the choristers or minor canons are thinking about. I think it is *you* who must be imaginative, to go and imagine what is no concern of yours. Are

you your brother's keeper? surely my feeling is more consistent with the fact, that the validity of christian ordinances does not depend upon the worthiness of the priest?"

"It depends to what ordinances you allude," retorted Baring. "Some christian ordinances are entirely dependent upon the holiness and faithfulness of the minister. The christian ordinance of preaching for instance! How can one who loves not his Saviour, preach Christ crucified with any benefit to the souls of others? It is true that in the sacraments, the minister is only a channel of divine graces and that, in these, the unfaithful steward 'who beats the men-servants and maidens and, eats and drinks and is drunken' although his own position will be with the unbelievers, is not to be a hindrance to those of his flock who seek Christ and is, therefore, still a channel for those special purposes, although he *can* be no personal blessing to his people. He can neither preach the gospel, nor watch

over the souls of his parishioners and, still less, regain the wanderers and the impenitent. Personal holiness is essential to all this. I am afraid your æsthetics would not teach the poor to follow Christ. The vast bulk of Englishmen, are, I am sure, of the 'imaginative nature' you describe, or what I should call unimaginative. They are too unimaginative for instance to be able, like yourself, to overlook the private life and conversation of the canons and choristers."

"If your notions are carried out they lead to all sorts of extravagances," said Herbert. "No! I admit that I go a long way with you, but I am convinced that, although personal religion is of course essential to each individual's salvation, yet that there is a power in the church beside the living preacher; there are the writings of the holy dead, the scriptures, the epistles, sermons and commentaries of pious men of other ages, the foundations and colleges endowed to perpetuate religious

instruction, and why not the works of the poet, the christian musical-composer, the christian painter and the christian architect? Surely souls may have been awakened to Christ by these works, as well as by sermons. Our Lord says that those who are not against Him are for Him and, if any one soul has been converted through the instrumentality of these artistic productions, are they not to be encouraged? For my part, to begin where we started, I would build a fine church where I could and even though I could not depend upon the faithfulness of the clergyman, because I believe that there are sermons in stones, and that the architect would speak christianity to some minds which might otherwise fall asleep under the influence of the preacher"

"It is because those minds are few, while there are thousands whom the architecture without the living gospel influence, would repulse, that I entirely disagree with you," re-

plied Baring. "But we are agreed in this, I hope, that the spirit and not the shell, is the one thing needful. I suppose, rather than neither, you would have the shell, but still, you must agree, that the kernel is the best."

"I don't acknowledge your simile," returned Herbert, "but I quite agree that the one thing needful is the love of the Saviour and the renewed heart, without which all the rest is useless."

"Well then," continued Baring, "we come back to our starting-point. My object was simply to explain, (and I am sure you must agree with me) that you will have gained more, far more, by inducing Mr. Drislow to engage an earnest working curate, whose salary you agree to pay, than if you had spent the capital of the same money in restoring and beautifying the church."

"I am quite of your views, Edward, about

the curate," rejoined Herbert, "but I do not see the necessity of depreciating everything else."

By this time they had reached the garden-door of the house, and Herbert conducted his cousin up-stairs into his own private study, a room lined with curious books, the intervening spaces on the walls being hung with old pictures in quaintly carved frames, while, here and there, about the room, were scattered numerous specimens of archæology—such as models of tombs, fonts, churches, crosses, coats-of-arms, tiles, old seals, rolls of parchment, and broken specimens of carved oak. The furniture was of ancient date and the whole den had something of the appearance of a curiosity-shop. The room itself was in the oldest part of the house and its mullioned windows harmonized with the furniture. Herbert had caused the oak ribs of the ceiling to be properly varnished and gilt and the intervening panels to be coloured blue. Stained glass

had been inserted here and there into the windows, representing the armorial bearings of his ancestors. From his childhood, long before he had turned his thoughts so exclusively to church-matters, Herbert had been an antiquary. It was when he was a boy that he drew the grand family-tree of the Lisles which was suspended over the oak mantel-piece of the room.

Having seated Baring in a Glastonbury chair and placed himself in a less comfortable mediæval contrivance of the same nature, Herbert resumed the conversation about Cawthorne, after which he went on to question his cousin about his own parish in Wiltshire. Edward was entirely absorbed in his cure and in all that appertained to the welfare of his flock. He had set to work in a thoroughly practical manner, to reform abuses, restore privileges and evangelize the neglected poor. The success which had attended his labours deeply interested Herbert, who, whatever may

have been his peculiarities and crotchets, was an ardent admirer of pure Christian zeal.

They were still conversing when a gentle knock was heard at the door and Mrs. Baring timidly ventured to intrude. She said that she had come in search of her husband, to tell him that she and Laura were proposing a walk through the village.

"Edward and I, were also going there," said Herbert. "May we accompany you?"

"That is the very thing Laura wanted. She does not like going into the school unless you are with us."

Accordingly Herbert and Edward joined the sisters in their walk. While the former had been in conversation, Laura remained with Mr. Lisle in the library and Mary had divided her time between their society and her children upstairs.

Mr. Lisle was an invalid. His repeated attacks of gout and continued use of colchicum had weakened his system and he was fast losing the use of his limbs. His medical ad-

visers had prescribed quiet, and he passed several hours in an arm chair reading the newspaper, while his leg lay extended upon a foot-rest. This forced repose was very irksome to one who had been accustomed to out-door pursuits and recreations, and whose reading had, of late, been confined to newspapers, reviews, and publications bearing upon agriculture. He had been recommended a wheel-chair, but could not sufficiently overcome his repugnance to that species of vehicle (which he always connected with the sallow-faced valetudinarians at Cheltenham) to be persuaded to try it. He preferred hobbling about with his stick and, usually, after luncheon would poke his way into the stable-yard and round the kitchen garden. In early life John Onslow Lisle (such was his name) had been distinguished at Oxford as a classic, but his studies had been pursued with an admixture of active recreation. He had been a first-rate fencer and an admirable *manège-rider*. His connexion with the university had been pre-

served for some years by his becoming a fellow of All-Souls. During his father's life he spent much of his time in London and frequented the best society of the days of the Regency.

Soon after his father's death, which occurred when he was nine-and-twenty, he threw up his fellowship and married Miss Winslow, by whom he had two daughters who died and, after a union of seven or eight years, his only surviving child, Herbert. Mrs. Lisle was the younger daughter of Colonel Winslow of Dean-side, in Herefordshire. Her elder sister married against her father's consent and died young, while her brother who had succeeded to the property, had run through most of his fortune on the turf or at cards. He had married and broken his wife's heart by his profligacy and she died after giving birth to a son who did not long survive his parent. These misfortunes had preyed for a time upon Winslow, but without arresting him in his

course of dissipation, or teaching him to seek consolation elsewhere than in his accustomed haunts. He had let his house at Deanside and spent his time among associates of his own tastes. In default of children the estate was entailed upon his sister's heir, otherwise it would long ago have been sold to pay his debts. Of late years Mr. Lisle had seen but little of his brother-in-law, although, before his wife's death, there had always been an interchange of letters and occasional visits, without any great amount of intimacy between them. On her death-bed Mrs. Lisle expressed a regret that she had not made a stronger effort to reclaim her brother from the life of sin in which he was plunged. Many years had since elapsed and during that time, Herbert, with his father's knowledge, had, upon various occasions, visited his uncle in London, in hopes of doing him some good by recalling to his remembrance the interest which his family

continued to feel in his welfare, and the desire which they had for his reformation. Such was the family of Herbert's mother.

Since his marriage, Mr. Lisle had spent his life in country pursuits and had sobered down into a quiet Gloucestershire Squire. He had once stood a contest for Stroud against a radical from the North and had been signally beaten: In politics he was a tory and never approved of that old-fashioned party-name being exchanged for the modern designation of conservative. It was during the struggle for the Reform-bill that the tories of Stroud had invited him to come forward for their borough, fancying that his name and standing would tell against the Lancashire cotton-spinner, who had been started by their opponents. Since that failure, he had declined a petition to stand for West Gloucestershire on Protectionist principles, not because he had ceased to be a warm opponent to free-trade and liberalism, but because he felt that he was growing too old to

give due attention to the cause of the farmer, whose claims he was better pleased to resign to the advocacy of a younger man. But for his desertion of protection for the principles of Peel, Herbert might have been solicited to come forward in his father's stead. He was one of those, who, notwithstanding his adhesion to free trade, gladly accepted Lord Derby's attempt to form a tory party independently of that question.

Mr. Lisle's chief pursuits had consisted in a certain amount of farming, hunting, shooting, the duties of a magistrate and the chairmanship of the poor-law union. He was a regular attendant at the board of guardians and at petty sessions, and never missed the quarter-sessions at Gloucester. For many years he had commanded a troop in the West-Gloucestershire yeomanry but, fifteen years before, had resigned his commission upon condition of Herbert's succeeding to the captaincy.

Such was the parentage of Herbert. The

son's character and views had been insensibly influenced by those of his father and some excuse may be found for the peculiarities of the former in the old-fashioned opinions of the latter. It is scarcely to be wondered at, that with his more poetical temperament, the staid toryism of the father should have developed into somewhat of a Quixotic mediæval philosophy in Herbert Lisle.

CHAPTER III.

WINFIELD JUSTICE.

WHEN Herbert entered his study, after an early walk, upon the following morning, he found two letters, one of which was a note from a brother magistrate at Winfield, as follows :

" Pardoe House, Winfield,

" Thursday Night.

" DEAR LISLE,

*" I have just received your note
and will meet you without fail at the magis-*

trate's room at twelve o'clock to-morrow (Friday). Walsh has informed me of the circumstances. I am glad the two boys are in custody.

"In haste,

"Your's very truly

"MATTHEW BEAKHAM."

The second letter ran thus :—

"13, *Clarges Street, Piccadilly.*

"MY DEAR HERBERT,

"If you happen to be coming to London during the next three weeks I should feel obliged by your calling upon me, or, if I knew where I should find you, I would

call upon you. Perhaps you will write me a line, for if you should not chance to be coming to town so soon, we might make some other appointment."

"You will perhaps be surprised at receiving this letter from me. The fact is that I am anxious to make an attempt to pay my creditors and this can only be done by means of some arrangements with regard to the Dean-side property, of which you are the next in tail.

"Pray oblige me by keeping this information as quiet as you can until we meet.

"With my kind regards to your father.

"I remain,

"Your affectionate uncle

"ARTHUR WINSLOW"

The contents of this last letter astonished Herbert not a little. The idea of Arthur

Winslow thinking of paying his debts was so novel that even Herbert was tempted to feel sceptical about it, and to imagine some ulterior design with respect to the Deanside estate. He endeavoured, however, to combat these doubts and when, after considerable reflection, he sat down to frame his reply, he had almost discarded them. As this was a matter which only concerned himself and, as his uncle had requested secrecy, he did not consider it necessary to consult his father before writing his answer.

This was Herbert's note :

"Cawthorne Court,

"Friday, 24th September, 18—.

"MY DEAR UNCLE ARTHUR,

*"I have received your letter
and, although I had no intention of going to*

London just at present I may as well arrange to meet you there as elsewhere. I must have gone to town some time or other, upon matters of business which will require my presence. I propose, therefore, if it should suit you, to go up on Tuesday next the 28th inst. and to call at your lodgings in the afternoon, or on the following day, which, being Michaelmas, will be well suited for payment of creditors, although, as you know, I prefer observing its original intention. I will follow your wishes in not naming your communication to any one.

“With regard to the Deanside property, I cannot help expressing myself candidly. You are unable, my dear uncle, to reap any benefit from it during your life and are, at the same time, hindered by the entail, from meeting the just demands of your creditors. If I were to succeed to the estate I should be unwilling to enjoy its benefits until all those claims were fully satisfied and, if it came to me in fee-

simple, I should sell it for that purpose. Under these circumstances you will not think I am presuming when I urge you to let me cut off the entail, in order that you may yourself do that act of justice and obtain, perhaps, a sufficient surplus to enable you to live in a moderate though comfortable way.

“Trusting you will pardon my presumption in venturing to offer advice.

“ I remain, my dear uncle,

“ Your affectionate nephew,

“ HERBERT LISLE”

Soon after writing this letter, Herbert bade farewell to Edward Baring who was returning to his parish, and mounted his horse to ride to Winfield.

As he rode his thoughts reverted to his

uncle's letter and his own reply. It seemed very strange that Arthur Winslow should have written to him upon the subject of a composition with his creditors. There must be more in this than he could fathom. The tone of the letter, too, was so different from his usual writing. There was an appearance of frankness and heartiness in the style which puzzled Herbert exceedingly. It had been this spirit of openness which had led him to make the offer contained in his answer and he felt pleased, at having endeavoured to meet his uncle's candour, by writing in a similar strain. But then, again the doubt crossed his mind as to his sincerity, for although he strove to banish the suspicion, he found it next to impossible entirely to stifle it.

Arthur Winslow was a professed gambler. There was scarcely a vice, short of those which the law pursues as crimes, of which he was not supposed to be guilty. His profligacy was

notorious and had, in former years, led him into numerous scrapes and even into occasional duels. He had now grown old in years, but had only become the more hardened in evil courses. His perverted taste led him to seek new stimulants and, from the diversions of London and Paris, he would fly to Wiesbaden, where he seldom failed to contract fresh debts upon his estate. In the society of his intimates he openly scoffed at religion, professing himself an atheist and deriding the notion of a future state. He was too well-bred to allow these opinions to obtrude beyond the confidential circle of his associates, and his vices were so concealed beneath a polished and agreeable exterior, that the high blood and old pedigree of the Winslows made themselves acknowledged, notwithstanding these disadvantages.

Such being Arthur Winslow's character, it is not surprising that the thought should have crossed Herbert's mind, that some fur-

ther mischief might possibly be hidden under the proposed arrangement touching the Dean-side property. Whatever may have been his suspicions, he entirely discarded them, and endeavoured to thrust aside the recollection of the letter until he should again hear from his uncle.

In the chamber of justice at Winfield and seated in the principal chair, was Matthew Beakham, the J. P.

He was a tall, sturdy, pompous man, of sixty, with a short neck and broad heavy shoulders. In days of yore he had been a captain of volunteers and had, ever since, affected a soldierly bearing and rigidity of posture, which did not sit amiss upon the man of peace. There were stories afloat among Matthew Beakham's detractors, of his gay doings in years gone by. These stories, coupled with the taurine appearance of his neck and head, had earned him the nickname of Bull Beakham. He was, however, more generally known among

the people of the place, as the King of Winfield.

The exterior of some people is their worst side, and so it was with Matthew Beakham. Notwithstanding all his external pomposity and rigidity, there never was a kinder-hearted, or better-natured man. It is true that he thrust himself into all the affairs of the little town of Winfield, but then he did thoroughly all that he undertook and no town in England could be better looked after. Whether it was a school to be inspected and remodelled, a rate to be levied, a church to be repaired, a relieving-officer to be reprimanded or a prisoner to be tried, everything that was done at Winfield came under the cognizance of Matthew Beakham. The parsons quarrelled with his supervision of the temporalities of the church, for he never intruded beyond that province. The churchwardens and overseers were offended by his examination of their rate-books. The mayor and corporation (for Winfield though

deprived of its member by the Reform-bill still possessed a corporation) with his usurpation of their duties, and the turnpike trustees with his permanent chairmanship and entire controul of their board. And yet, but for Matthew Beakham, it is highly probable that the little town of Winfield would have been delivered up to jobbery and mismanagement of all kinds. Nothing could be more disinterested than his sway. I say nothing could be *more* disinterested because it is said, and the statement is founded upon that presumption, that all human actions are, more or less, interested. Matthew Beakham was certainly interested in satisfying his own high sense of right and equity, his own pride of dignity, his own notions of consistency. Besides this, he enjoyed the occupation of governing Winfield and the feeling of power which it earned him, but otherwise, his services were voluntary and unrequited. A patriot expects to be repaid by the honour of the citizens, but Matthew Beakham's good

offices seldom obtained him the thanks but frequently the disapproval of his fellow townsmen. He made it the one business of his life to be at his post upon all occasions. Other magistrates might be called away by their own affairs, or allured from the seat of justice by a shooting party or a meet of the hounds, but he never laid aside his self-imposed duties for any pursuits, however tempting to his tastes, or conducive to his interests.

But there were even better features in Matthew Beakham's character than his devotion to the public affairs of Winfield. Those who knew him intimately were aware of the sterling qualities which lay hidden beneath his dignified exterior, and the poor could attest to numerous acts of private beneficence and kindness.

When Herbert entered the small close chamber, used as a justice-room at Winfield, he found Matthew Beakham engaged in conver-

sation with Mr. Butterworth, clerk to the magistrates.

The attorney in question was a fat, round backed, pug-nosed, bald-pated man of fifty, with small sharp eyes, placed in conjunction at the top of his turn-up nose, like the handles of a closed pair of scissors. Seated to his left was an individual already known to the reader, Alfred Johnson, apprenticed clerk to Samuel Butterworth. This gentleman has been described as good-looking enough to have captivated the fancy of a village maiden and sufficiently unprincipled to have plotted her ruin.

Butterworth rose to receive Lisle when he entered, while the justice contented himself with nodding his head and extending his hand with an amiable condescension, which, however it might have been mistaken by others, was valued by Herbert at its true worth. After a few brief enquiries upon extra-judicial topics, Mr. Beakham proposed that they

should commence the proceedings about which they had met.

Johnson disappeared for a moment and presently returned, followed by the policeman, the two culprits, the whole batch of witnesses and such of the Winfield public as were interested in the enquiry.

It is possible that, when he went to summon the policeman, Johnson may have seen, among the witnesses, certain faces which he recognized; for, upon his return to his seat, he looked somewhat crest-fallen and never attempted to raise his eyes from the paper upon which he was scribbling the depositions.

And, in truth, among the crowd, which nearly filled the limited space beyond the magisterial precincts, were to be seen the faces of William Perdon, Phœbe Elton and a batch of Cawthorne villagers.

"Are those the prisoners?" enquired Beakham of the policeman: "If so, let them stand forward in the centre there."

"Would it not be as well that the witnesses should go out of the room until they are wanted?" asked Herbert in a low voice of the magnate by whose side he was seated.

"Well, well!" this was a favorite commencement with that worthy: "yes, if you object to their presence they may leave the room, but I should not fancy, myself, that there was any objection to their hearing the evidence. It gives them more opportunity, you know, to reply."

Herbert was silenced.

"Now, Mr. Walsh," said Beakham to the policeman, "where is the prosecutrix?"

"It is Mrs. Welbourne," rejoined the clerk, "Mrs. Welbourne is the prosecutrix."

"Well, well! Is she sworn? Swear her some one; where's the book?"

It was usually Mr. Alfred Johnson's place to swear the witnesses, but, upon the present occasion, that gentleman was so completely absorbed in the duties of his clerkship, that he

seemed not to hear the words of the great Justice. Luckily the policeman, a red-faced, demure-looking man, with black hair parted and brushed straight, saw the book and, pouncing upon it, gave it to Mrs. Welbourne, who stood forward and eyed the two defendants while she held it, as if she were defying them, as much as to say, "now you young good-for-nothings, won't I give it you?"

The two lads differed in their manner of receiving her menacing looks. The elder boy, a thin, fair haired, dare-devil looking fellow of sixteen, stared her straight in the face, while the younger, a native of Cawthorne, who might therefore be expected to feel more subdued in the presence of the inflammable washerwoman, hung down his head and turned aside.

"Now, wait a minute. What are your names?" said Beakham addressing the prisoners.

"Answer the gentleman," said Walsh, the policeman, to the elder boy.

"My name? It ayn't no consarn o'yoars! You bain't my godfather, I suppose?"

"Well, well! come, come! This won't do! This is not the way to speak in a court of justice, in the presence of magistrates," retorted Beakham with some warmth: "if you speak in this manner you shall be punished for contempt. Pray what is your name my lad?" he continued, addressing the younger prisoner.

"George Wales, sir."

"I don't mind telling my name for the matter o'that," proceeded the elder lad. "My name is Bill Jenks, or William Jenks. So it be," he continued, addressing Walsh, upon whose face there lingered an incredulous smile.

"Do you know him, Walsh?" asked Beakham—for the criminal procedure at Winfield did not tie itself down to any prescribed routine or formula and the evidence of previous

convictions" as often preceded, as followed, the case actually before the court.

"Know him? I knows him of old, sir, but it ayn't as Bill Jenks or William Jenks neither, as he was last in Gloucester Gaol."

"Ah! ha! So you've been in gaol before. Now take care what you're about my lad."

"It may be as well," suggested Lisle, "to go on with the examination of the prosecutrix. This evidence of a former conviction does not properly come before us, now."

"Yes, yes, swear her. The oath which you shall give, &c.," continued Beakham, swearing the witness himself.

The worthy magistrate then went on to examine Mrs. Welbourne, whose evidence was limited to the fact of her having given the articles in question to Phœbe Elton to mend, of her having sent for them on Thursday morning when they were not forth-coming and of the identity of those found upon the prisoners and produced by Walsh.

"Then, in fact you know nothing at all about it, Mrs. Welbourne," said Beakham. "You may make room for the next witness."

"But perhaps the defendants may wish to ask her some questions?" remarked Herbert.

"Oh! Ah! Well, well! Have you any question to put to the witness?" he said, addressing the boys.

"No! She arn't said nothing about my stealing them," replied the elder. "She can't swear as I took 'em, nor no one else neither."

"Well, well! You know you must make your defence presently. This is the time to put questions. This is your cross examination."

The next witness was Phœbe.

Mr. Alfred Johnson was especially busy with his pen and his head was bent very low indeed, while this witness gave her evidence.

"Well, well," rejoined Matthew Beakham

after a patient hearing of her story, "and pray tell me now, (you know you are upon your oath,) did you not see any one besides the two defendants?" for she had sworn to the identity of the lads.

"No, and she didn't see me neither," exclaimed the elder prisoner. "She takes a false oath if she swears to seeing me."

"Hold your tongue. It will be your turn to speak by-and-bye and to ask any questions you like. She swears to having seen you, and it is for us to decide whether we believe her word or *yours*," retorted Beakham. "And now, tell me, girl? answer my question: did you meet any one else on Wednesday evening after you left the parcel of clothes under Welbourne's porch? It seems to me that it was a very improper and careless thing to do;" he continued, turning to Lisle. "I suppose it was some sweet-hearting—no good I'm afraid?"

"No harm in it," whispered Lisle. "She is going to be married probably, to the school-

master and it was an engagement to meet him."

"Well, well! Now answer my question, girl! Who did you meet, besides the prisoners, after you left Martha Welbourne's cottage? remember you are upon your oath."

"I met—*that* gentleman, Mr. Johnson, sir,"

"Mr. Johnson? Oh! taking a walk I suppose?"

Mr. Johnson was inspecting his depositions so closely that nothing but his hair was visible.

"Who else did you meet? What I want to know, my girl, is, why you went on without calling in at Welbourne's cottage? I want you to speak out and tell me what made you hurry on so fast? Now speak the truth."

"It was because he wrote me a letter, sir, that I went to meet him. He wrote for me to meet him in Hollow Lane, between seven and eight o'clock."

"Who—who did?"

"Mr. Johnson, sir!"

"How, Mr. Johnson? I thought you said it was the schoolmaster," said Beakham, turning enquiringly to Herbert Lisle.

"So, I thought. This is quite new."

All eyes rested upon Johnson, who, upon being nudged by Mr. Butterworth, had been forced to raise his head and exhibit a face suffused with blushes, but not without an indignant scowl at the poor girl who had betrayed him.

"What is this, Mr. Johnson? did you make an appointment for this girl, Phœbe Elton, to meet you?" demanded Beakham.

"I don't see, sir," replied the incipient lawyer, "that this enquiry has much to do with the case before the bench. However, I may have had the indiscretion, in a weak moment, to allow this girl to allure me from the path of rectitude. I confess to the soft impeachment, gentlemen and readily own my fault and my contrition. I am not the first who has been

her victim," continued the young man emboldened by perceiving a smile on Mr. Butterworth's chubby but amusing face: "nor was I the only one whom she met in Hollow Lane! I will not say more."

"Yes, sir, but you shall say more!" exclaimed William Perdon indignantly—"Tell the court—"

"Silence! What's all this?" said Beakham with some irritation; "pray, sir, what do you mean by interrupting the proceedings in this way?"

"You shall speak in your turn, Perdon!" rejoined Lisle encouragingly.

He was utterly bewildered by the new light which Phœbe's evidence had thrown upon her own conduct in this affair and longed to afford Perdon an opportunity of solving the mystery.

"I suppose, Mr. Johnson, you will say more if *we* require it. Well, well! Girl! Phœbe

Elton, does that gentleman speak the truth when he says that he was not the only person that met you in Hollow Lane ?”

“ Please, sir,” replied Phoebe, “ Mr. Johnson speaks false and he knows he does. It was—”

“ So, so ! What’s this ? You must not go on in this way. You must answer the questions that are put to you. You are come here as a witness, remember, and have taken a solemn oath ; so mind what you are about, girl ! Now, answer my question : was Mr. Johnson the only person that met you in Hollow Lane ?”

“ Answer Mr. Beakham’s question, can’t you ?” said Butterworth perceiving that Phoebe still hesitated, and fixing his lynx eyes upon her.

“ No, sir, Mr. Perdon came in time to protect me from him.”

“ Oh ! I dare say ! A pretty story !” exclaimed Johnson, standing up and turning to—

wards the bench, with a touching look of injured innocence. "Gentlemen, may I request as a favour that the evidence of this witness be confined strictly to the case before the bench? False as her statements are, they may do me irreparable injury in the eyes of an indiscriminating public. Gentlemen, I entreat your favour and consideration."

After his brief appeal, he bowed gracefully to the justices, cast a withering glance at the witness who had libelled his fair fame and sat down. Mr. Alfred Johnson was preparing to practice as an advocate in the county courts and, having studied and rehearsed the attitudes of the barristers at Gloucester, was especially apt at imitating the negligent postures of certain counsellors during their examinations and addresses to the jury.

"Well, well," said Beakham: "well, well! We shall see. We must hear what the girl has to say, you know."

"And must remember," added Lisle, "that she has a character to lose as well as Mr. Johnson."

"And yet, sir," ventured Mr. Butterworth, "I think you would be inclined to allow that there is some difference between the character of a gentleman in Mr. Johnson's position and a girl like the witness, who, even according to her own showing, must have gone wrong."

As Mr. Butterworth said this he turned his sharp eyes from the justices and fixed them upon the witness and then turned them back interrogatively towards the bench.

"That remains to be seen, I think, Mr. Butterworth," said Lisle, "I do not think that she has acknowledged to having gone wrong, as you call it."

"No, no!" added Beakham, looking carefully through his notes: "No, no—not yet I think, Mr. Butterworth."

"Now tell me, Phœbe Elton?" asked Lisle,

"did you meet William Perdon by appointment?"

"No, sir; by chance."

"Tell us the whole of the circumstance."

"Well, well! That will be better."

And hereupon Phœbe rehearsed the history of her adventure, already known to the reader. Once or twice, Mr. Johnson made mute appeals with his eyes to the bench and once, even rose up to speak, but Herbert's vigilance and determination hindered him from any verbal interruptions of her story.

"Do you happen to have Johnson's letter?" enquired Herbert.

"Mr. Perdon has it."

"Now gentlemen really!" exclaimed Johnson, rising with all the dignity of a serjeant-at-law before the justices of the Common Pleas. "Now really, gentlemen, I must beg—I must entreat—indeed I altogether object to the production of any documents. I object *in toto* to

the mode in which the examination has been conducted—a witness—a girl of no reputation, is allowed to stand up in that box and blast the prospects of a man in my position. Really, gentlemen, this is not fair. That girl is upon her oath and I have no defence. Put me upon my oath and I will give her the lie. But no! I do not happen to be a witness in this case, and yet, forsooth, without rhyme or reason, I am dragged into it. Gentlemen, this is not right. Mr. Butterworth, I appeal to you.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said Butterworth, coming forward in aid of his clerk: “I think you have exceeded your powers. I think this evidence of the girl Elton’s on the subject of her meeting with Johnson, in Hollow Lane, has no bearing whatever upon the case before the bench.”

“In so far,” returned Lisle, “as her character as a witness is concerned. Mr. Johnson had chosen, uninvited by the bench, to impugn

her character as a witness. It was necessary that she should have an opportunity of vindicating herself. The credibility of the evidence is affected by this."

"Yes, yes ! Certainly, that is *so*, Mr. Butterworth," added Beakham.

When the prisoners were allowed to cross-examine, Jenks asked one or two awkward questions such as—

"Was it me you see in the lane?"

"Yes, I saw you both."

"No—you's swore false ! I was along with John Graves at the brick-kill that time."

"That's your defence ; you will tell us that by-and-bye. Have you any more questions to put to the witness ? She says she saw you."

"She tells what ayn't true. I was with John Graves."

"You can call him when the time comes for your defence."

"He bain't here."

"Have you any more questions?"

"It bain't no use asking *her* : She's took her oath to a falsehood."

"Well, well ! William Perdon ! Swear him."

William Perdon was sworn as a witness to corroborate Phoebe Elton's evidence. He told his tale simply and shortly, notwithstanding Mr. Johnson's angry exclamations and Mr. Butterworth's doubtful looks.

"Gentlemen, I consider that this mode of conducting proceedings is perfectly irregular. My reputation has been publicly assailed and I shall know how to vindicate it in—in short gentlemen, in the public prints—I must be allowed to retire."

And hereupon Mr. Alfred Johnson rose from his seat and commenced a retreat towards the inner door of the room.

"I am afraid, Mr. Johnson, that no vindication of your conduct in the newspapers, can wipe the stain off your moral character, if, as it appears, you have, indeed, attempted the

seduction of this simple and unoffending girl. You will do better to profit by this lesson and change your course of life."

Herbert spoke feelingly, because he felt indignant at the discovery of this plot to corrupt the fairest maiden in Cawthorne and one, of a family, in whose welfare he had taken especial interest.

Johnson's reputation had been too publicly compromised, and his vanity too keenly wounded for the sting to pass unfelt. He glanced angrily and, bowing low, left the room, muttering some inaudible words and slamming the door behind him. In the retirement of his chamber the tears of vindictive rage filled his eyes and many a bitter curse passed his lips, ere, at length, he found sweet relief in penning a letter to the Editor of the *Gloucester Guardian*, in which he boldly stigmatized the injustice and cruelty of a certain magistrate, living not a hundred miles from Cawthorne.

Unfortunately the Gloucester Editor was too

much under aristocratical domination to permit the insertion of a letter written in such a spirit, and, consequently, Mr. Johnson was forced to write in great secrecy (lest it should come to the ears of his patron, Mr. Butterworth, the great tory Solicitor in Winfield) a strong denunciation of the aforesaid magistrate to the radical print at Stroud, so penned that none of the readers of that democratic organ should be enabled to trace it to the pen of Mr. Butterworth's articulated clerk.

The evidence of William Perdon, which went only to confirm the truth of Phœbe's story, was followed by that of the policeman, who swore to having found the articles, which he produced, in possession of the defendants.

The case was conclusively established against the two lads, who were severally called upon for their defence.

"Did not you say you had a witness to call?" enquired Herbert.

"No, sir, I am't no witness."

"Then what defence do you make? What have you to say for yourself?"

"I arn't nothing to say. They swear false, and it's no use saying nothing agin'em—It warn't on me they was found; it was on t'other lad. I was coming from the kill, and this young feller met me and gave me the clothes, and tell me as how he'd found 'em in the road—you know you did!"

"Have you nothing to say little boy?" asked Beakham addressing the younger lad, who had looked up with surprise at the threatening face of his companion, when he thus endeavoured to throw the whole blame upon him.

"Well, Giles, I woudn't peach if I was you," said the lad turning his eyes without any sign of terror towards the other prisoner; and then, looking up boldly at the magistrates, he continued: "No, sir, I hasn't nothing to say. I isn't goin to peach," he added in a lower voice, for his companion's benefit.

"Is it true," enquired Lisle of the police-

man, "that the goods were found exclusively in the possession of Wales, the younger prisoner, I mean?"

"Oh! dear, no, sir—I found them all excepting one article, the petticoat, I think, upon Giles; for that was the name he went by when he was last at Gloucester. I remember him."

The investigation terminated in the committal of the two defendants to Gloucester Gaol for the ensuing sessions, and the binding over of the witnesses to appear against them upon their trial.

The bench adjourned, and Herbert walked arm-in-arm with Matthew Beakham through the single street of Winfield, whose inhabitants made obeisance to the monarch and his friend, as they passed along. At the Beaufort Arms Herbert mounted his horse and pursued his way homewards through the lanes, musing upon the strange disclosures of the morning and enjoying the bright autumnal-day.

Meanwhile, upon leaving the justice-room, William Perdon found Phœbe standing alone and offered her his arm. Mrs. Welbourne and her friends vainly endeavoured to prevail upon them to join in a convivial glass at the Sheeps' Head, where she proposed adjourning.

They preferred returning at once to Cawthorne through the fields and lanes.

It was a holiday with Perdon, who, having received a summons to attend the Winfield petty sessions, had dismissed his school at an early hour. On the previous evening he had seen Phœbe when she had gone for the children, and had ventured to accompany her home and take tea with Sally Dolby. More than this ; even long after tea was over and when the moon was shining bright and clear, he had conversed with Phœbe at the garden-gate. The poor girl had been scolded by old Sally, whose proud heart could not brook that a grandchild of her's, living under her own roof, should be supposed to have entertained a

thought of shame. She had been ready enough to vindicate her to others, but paid it off upon the girl herself, until the tears ran down her cheeks and her aching head and sobbing heart seemed to bespeak her contrition. Phœbe had much to lead her to regret what had passed and, more than all, the conduct of Perdon in her behalf, for she could not help pondering over his kindness and contrasting it with Johnson's selfish designs. The recollections of her past ingratitude determined her to seek an interview with the schoolmaster and, with that object, she went and fetched the children home herself. William was touched by her subdued manner—like that of Ruth at the feet of Boaz—so meek and respectful. During tea Perdon said little, but had tact enough to discover that old Sally had not spared the poor girl, and his pitiful heart was wounded at the notion of her humiliation. Before he left the cottage, he said in a low

voice: "Show me how to chain the gate, Phœbe."

She followed him into the garden, and he took her hand—

"Oh, Master Perdon," said she, "I've been a very naughty girl—I have done very wrong."

And he felt the tears trickling upon his hand, as he replied: "No Phœbe! You meant for the best—I know you did!" For he would not blame Johnson while he fancied that she still loved him.

"You speak so kindly, Master Perdon! You are so good to me, and never find fault.—Master Perdon, I have no one else to speak to but you, for grandmother chides and scolds me so, that I havn't dared to ask her, but I want to know if I should take this letter to show to-morrow to the gentlemen at Winfield, when we go? It's a letter Mr. Alfred sent me! Will you take it? If it is of no use, burn it up, for I will not see

it again. It was a bad business, and I cannot bear to think about it.—Good night.”

Such had been their conversation of the previous evening, and Perdon had kept the letter until the investigation was concluded. Johnson’s conduct during the enquiry had not raised him in Phœbe’s estimation and she felt more Ruth-like than ever as she walked homewards through the stubble-fields, with her neat, prim-looking, young schoolmaster of a Boaz, with his straight-combed hair, gray Saxon eyes and slightly turn-up nose.

“May I tear up the letter, Phœbe, now?”

“Yes, oh, yes, Master Perdon;—I never wish to see it again, nor any like it.”

“I’m very sorry it all came out;—I hoped it would not.”

“And for Mr. Herbert Lisle to hear it too!” said Phœbe. “He’ll never send me to the training-school now!”

“Do you wish to go, Phœbe?”

“Yes, Master Perdon, but I fear—”

"If I can see Mr. Herbert, I'll explain to him all about it.—But would you like to be a schoolmistress?"

"Yes, Master Perdon."

"I know what Mr. Herbert's plans are, but you would like some—some other place, perhaps?"

Phoebe turned her black eyes upon the schoolmaster with a look of patient supplication.

"Would you like to be—to live at Cawthorne?"

"Yes, Master Perdon."

"And—and be my wife?"

"I'm not worthy of it—but I'd try to be—"

They had now reached a spot where a copse extended to the right and an oak tree, with wide spreading branches, overshadowed a clear streamlet, flowing through the bottom of a dell, of which the waters could only be crossed by stepping stones. The beauty of the place was remarkable and of a kind to which the

peasant girl and her companion were not insensible. The stepping-stones afforded an opportunity which was not lost upon the lovers. But we will leave them to their innocent bliss and pursue the fortunes of less favoured mortals.

CHAPTER IV.

DOUBTS.

By return of post, Herbert received the following letter:—

“13, *Clarges Street, Piccadilly.*

“*Saturday, 25th September, 18—.*

“MY DEAR HERBERT,

“It would be ungracious were I not to acknowledge your letter by return of post. It is just what I might have expected from you, and far more than meets my views.

After such an example I should be acting ungenerously not to afford you a full explanation, should you be willing, and think it worth your while, to hear the doubts and difficulties of one who is afraid to reflect upon his past existence, and dares, still less, contemplate the future. Come and see me on Tuesday evening if convenient. I shall wait at home for you. With my kind regards to your father,

“ Believe me to remain,

“ Your affectionate uncle,

“ ARTHUR WINSLOW.”

It was Sunday morning. Herbert had left his cousin Laura at the school, where she had volunteered to examine the girls in scripture history, and returned to his father, who was accustomed upon that morning, before church, to hobble round the

stables and farm-yard, to see that all was in proper order. Herbert gave him an arm and, thus propped, between his son and his strong thorn-stick, the old man limped along, dressed in his Sunday-coat and with a new white beaver hat upon his head.

"I am going to London on Tuesday, father, for two or three days. Is there anything I can do for you?" enquired Herbert as they were leaving the stable-yard.

"And you leave me to take care of the girls, eh. What will they say to that?" rejoined Mr. Lisle.

"So long as they do not fidget you, father, I have no fears on that score. They are quite up to amusing themselves. Mary has her children, and Laura is in clover when she can visit cottages and teach schools. But I shall be back in two or three days at farthest."

"Oh! they don't come much in my way. No, I like your cousins as well as most girls; Mary has a shrewd head of her own. It is a

pity Laura thinks of nothing but her cottages, and her good books. I have always been of opinion that these things are very well in their way, but that you may have too much even of a good thing. You see, persons should not entirely exclude themselves from the society for which they were born. They should live for the position in which providence has placed them. She shuts herself completely out of society, and gets full of prejudices and crotchets, against this thing and that."

"Perhaps she considers herself ill-fitted to shine in society, father, and believes that providence has, rather, formed her for visiting the poor."

"I am sorry she should give way to such notions, but it is her own look-out, not mine. She is a well-meaning girl enough. I hope she won't go and fill the cottages with rubbishing tracts without Drislow's permission; that's all I ask!"

"No, I can vouch for *that*, father. Indeed

we called at the Vicarage yesterday and Drislow told her she might give presents to some of the cottagers, and she showed him the books."

"Yes, because I have no notion of filling the people's heads with a lot of new fancies. It is very nearly as bad as the ranters used to be!"

"Well, father, I cannot quite agree with you there. I am sure that Laura would teach nothing in opposition to the Bible and prayer-book, and am certain she would not lead the people to disregard the clergyman of the parish."

"Well, I suppose you've all the same notions now-a-days. You have no fancy I hope, for marrying Laura?"

"Not the least."

"I wish you'd find a sensible good wife, Herbert, I am sure! By the way I was talking to Laura about your uncle's neighbours, the Mordens. What sort of girl is Miss Morden?"

Would not she suit you? I should fancy she would have a pretty good jointure."

"I don't think you would select her for me if you knew her."

"You don't fancy her? Well!"

"I expect to see my uncle Arthur in London, father. He has written to beg me to call upon him," said Herbert; who had, after much deliberation, decided upon telling his father thus much.

"What the devil can he want to see you for? He'll ask you to lend him money or else to cut off the entail, or some mischief. He has never paid me any interest on the two hundred pounds which I lent him, for two years, and not a single instalment, as he promised. I should not complain, if I thought he ever meant to do it. No, he is your poor mother's brother, I can never forget that, and I'd give him the money outright, if I thought he had the slightest intention to become, what shall I say? an honest man, Herbert! yes, an

honest man ; for I don't think he's that now ; I don't indeed. A man who can go on with his creditors as he has done, and can gamble away the money he owes and live the life he does, I'm afraid there's no doing any good with him. Take care what you're about, my good fellow, that's all ! Don't let him take you in, Herbert."

They had walked round the farm-yard and inspected the litter of Berkshire pigs, when the bell reminded them that it was near church time. Mr. Lisle was unable to go in the morning, but occasionally ventured in the afternoon, when the service was shorter. He nevertheless made a point of sitting in-doors during the whole period of divine service.

Herbert found his cousins in the library and accompanied them to church, which, as we have already seen, closely adjoined the manor-house, the enclosure being hemmed in by the Squire's grounds. A square tower with a round corner-turret, stood at its western ex-

tremity, terminating the nave but not concealing the gable of the south aisle. At the east-end there were two gables of equal size, the one lighted by three lancets and the other by a huge perpendicular window, of which the arch was considerably depressed. Through the stone porch upon the south side, the farmers and villagers of Cawthorne were flocking in their best apparel.

There might be seen farmer Green's family, his son was a yeoman in Captain Lisle's troop, who grew *moustâches* every spring for the week's permanent duty. Miss Green was the belle of Cawthorne church. She and her sister Letitia, had both been taught to play on the piano and sing, and were the best dancers at the farmer's ball at Winfield, and at the occasional festivities with which Mr. Lisle had been in the habit of regaling his son's squadron, when the wives and daughters of the troopers attended after dinner, and joined in a dance upon the lawn. Farmer Green's pew came

next to the great square box occupied by the Squire's family and guests, which was ensconced in a snug corner of the south aisle.

The architecture of the interior was of a kind which might be better appreciated by an antiquary than a man of taste. The walls and arches were disfigured by plaster and white-wash, excepting in the chancel, where they had been scraped. The pulpit, reading-desk, and clerk's pew, formed a huge unsightly erection immediately outside the chancel arch, and the seats were of painted wood, rapidly decaying under the influence of damp, which had tinged the walls with green in various places. The gallery was a rickety construction containing a barrel organ capable of grinding out a select number of chaunts and old psalm-tunes. By far the least ugly portion of the church was the chancel, of which the south side was enclosed by an old oak screen separating it from the aisle, of which the eastern extremity had been, time out of mind, the burying place of

the Lises. The arches which divided this private chapel from the chancel were plastered up and white-washed. What little had been done to beautify the choir, was owing to Herbert Lisle, who had persuaded the vicar to let him scrape the windows and arches, repair the sacarium with Minton's tiles and embellish the altar with a handsome covering. These slight touches produced a certain effect, and, at all events, rendered this the least neglected part of the edifice. The school children were seated on either side of the choir, at the great risk of colds and rheumatism, inasmuch as, owing to the accumulation of earth against them, the walls and tiled floor were dreadfully damp.

Still less edifying than the internal arrangements and decorations, was the mode of celebrating divine service pursued by the worthy vicar, John Prosser Drislow. It is true that the grind-organ and school-children assisted him in some portions, by chaunting certain of the

canticles and singing the morning hymn and old hundredth ; but, whatever exuberance of Christian joy these attempts at melody-making might inspire, it was sufficiently counteracted by his very tranquillizing discourse upon morality in the abstract.

From his place in the moss-grown chancel, Perdon could see Phœbe in the western gallery ; and, it is to be feared (as such an example could not fail to be pernicious to the children) that, once or twice during the sermon, his eyes might have been caught resting upon the very spot where the nut-brown maiden sat. There were no better voices in the church than those of the schoolmaster and his sweetheart, for he had become a proficient in singing at the Training College and had, himself, instructed Phœbe while at school. Nor, was it for lack of teaching that the choir at Cawthorne was not more effective, for Perdon trained them well, but, as his efforts were unaided by

the organist or the vicar, they had ended in failure.

Upon the present occasion the vicar preached from the words of the 28th verse, of the 4th chapter of Ephesians: "*Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour.*" In looking through his pile of sermons he alighted upon this text, which seemed peculiarly appropriate for bringing before his parishioners the heinousness of the offence, for which one of their number—the boy Wales—was now suffering in prison.

When he took the sermon from the drawer he had only seen the text, which had struck him as so aposite, that he did not trouble himself to read its contents, entirely forgetting that it was an old assize sermon preached before the judges at Gloucester during Mr. Lisle's shrievalty, when he had acted as his chaplain. The sermon began with a lengthened consideration of the Ten Commandments, and especially the eighth, and then went on to treat of the new

testament as a confirmation and extension of the old, but ameliorated to suit the improved condition of mankind. This was followed by a speculative theory, that the laws of England are founded upon scripture, and their administration confided to Christian judges ; and these passages so insensibly merged into a pathetic appeal to the judges of assize, supposed to be present, that the worthy preacher found himself more than half through the sentence before he could possibly draw in :—

“ Upon you reposes the sacred office of interpreting and administering these scriptural percepts. You are those chosen, as it were, by God and man, to utter the solemn words of doom, which send the felon to his Maker’s bar. If, in the midst of your awful duties, when the balance of life and death hangs, as by a thread, from your hands, a sudden tremor should flit across your brow, or a sudden fear alarm your too susceptible imaginations, then [My Lords] remember the words of my text—they are the

words of St. Paul. The Christian apostle reiterates and confirms the time-honored command of Moses, and shall Christians not suffer a like doom? Are we, who are so much more endowed with light to bestow lesser punishments than the Jews? Be assured that the laws of our country are the laws of the Gospel and that those theorists who seek the abolition, as they are pleased to call it, of capital punishment, are not better Christians than St. Paul from whom my text is taken."

The vicar did succeed in leaving out the *My Lords*, which is included in brackets, but felt himself unable to vary the remainder, which was the more unfortunate, as, since the days when it was preached, the practice of capital punishment for sheep-stealing (a penalty which the sermon sought to uphold as breathing the true spirit of Christianity) had been entirely abolished.

Poor Mrs. Wales was greatly alarmed when

she heard so much about capital punishment and almost fainted in her seat, but all eyes were turned towards Herbert's pew, for he appeared to be the one especially addressed in the passage above cited and in other portions of the sermon, as he had acted as judge. Several old women were affected to tears, for the first time, during the many years they had listened to Mr. Drislow's eloquent discourses.

On coming out of church, Herbert was speaking to one of the farmers, when Mrs. Wales stopped and curtsied to him :

"Please, sir, Mr. Lisle; might I speak to you?"

"Well, my good woman," replied Herbert, who did not much fancy her, seeing the character she bore in the village.

"I trust it bain't all true as the parson says that they'll be for hanging my lad?"

"No—When did Mr. Drislow tell you that?"

"Nay, sir, but in his sarment he said it."

"He was speaking of others, not of your son, my good woman."

"I thanks God, sir, for what you say. The poor boy ain't that bad disposed after all; but we arn't gin him the schoolin' we oughtst, bein' poor; but might I beg a favour of your honor; to take the lad into your honor's school as I've heard tell on. We'd take it as a favor, please your honor, in beggin' your pardon for the liberty."

"What school do you mean?"

"The new school as I've heerd tell on, nigh to Gloucester, for such as he."

"Well—I'll see what can be done," answered Herbert, not a little pleased at the request, as it led him to feel that the new reformatory for juvenile felons, in which he was interested, was duly appreciated: "It is not exactly my school, Mrs. Wales; but I think I shall be able to get your boy into it."

"And thank you, sir, for your goodness."

The cottagers bowed or curtseyed, and the farmers shook hands with Herbert, as they passed him in the church-yard.

After a short interview with the vicar, Herbert and his cousins proceeded into the shrubberies and passed the interval before luncheon in a short walk.

"I want you to see a letter which Mary has received from Edward this morning," said Laura to Herbert, when they were in the grounds.

"Oh, yes," added Mary Baring, "I had not time to tell you about it this morning, but I should like you to see it. He met a gentleman in the railway, who told him that Mr. Arthur Winslow has suddenly become quite a changed character, and that nobody knows what to make of it. He was expected at Doncaster, but did not make his appearance at the St. Leger. That seems to have been the first intimation of the change. Since that some of his friends have seen him and can't make him

out. Edward says that the gentlemen who told him this, and who, I think, he knew at Oxford, is not at all a religious person and would be unable to appreciate a sudden conversion. He hopes, however, that some change of that kind may have taken place."

"May I read what Edward says about it?" enquired Herbert.

"I'll give you the letter in the house."

"I hope it may be a genuine conversion," said Laura; "some people distrust sudden conversions, but I cannot see how, in the case of such a—of Mr. Winslow, I mean," pursued Laura, afraid lest her expression might offend Herbert: "a *conversion* could be otherwise, than rather sudden, and, I trust, sincere."

"Yes, he is no hypocrite! I never knew a more open profligate than my worthy uncle Winslow," rejoined Herbert, "so that you might have ventured upon finishing your sentence, Laura!"

Herbert read the letter which told him no

more than he had heard from Mary, but which tended to unravel the mystery of the notes received from his uncle. He did not think it necessary to make known this correspondence to his cousins, but Edward's letter enabled him to say more to his father than he had yet ventured to express.

"What a strange story it is," said Mr. Lisle, as they sat over the fire after dinner, that same evening; "I don't believe it is anything but a hoax! It is downright dishonest if it is, but what can you expect of him after the things he has done? He may think it is the best policy to be converted as they call it. It pays some people to turn saints. They make a mint of money out of it sometimes. I knew a scamp of a fellow once who turned saint, and wore his hair cropped in front and hanging over his collar, and went round the country attending bible and missionary meetings, and spoke so as to draw tears from all the ladies. They used to pay his expenses and so much an

hour for speaking, and he made a capital thing of it. At last, he robbed the missionary or propagation society, I forget which, and bolted to America with the till."

"Oh, but surely, father, any change in uncle Arthur would be for the better! Besides, I don't think, that, whatever his faults may have been, he was ever accused of hypocrisy."

"I don't know what you may call hypocrisy, but a man who would run up debts and make bets without a farthing to pay, is to my mind, a rogue, and a rogue would not scruple at a wee bit of hypocrisy, now and then. Well, all I can do is to advise you to be upon your guard with the fellow, and not to be taken in by him. It is a suspicious thing to say the least of it. A sudden conversion! I don't believe in them. Depend upon it, the pocket has something to do with it."

Herbert was a good deal perplexed when he came to reflect upon the matter and determi-

ned to be upon his guard and judge fairly, for himself.

On the following day he went to visit the juvenile reformatory near Gloucester, which went by the name of the St. Nicholas Refuge, from the parish in which it was situated.

Mr. Barford was present at the council meeting that day, and, at the conclusion of the business, induced Herbert to accompany him to luncheon at his residence, which was but a short distance from the school.

"I forget whether you know the Seymours?" said Barford, "you will meet ~~them~~ at Branstone; they have been staying with us for some days. Elsie Seymour is a charming girl. She has the reputation of being blue but, when you get better acquainted with her, all that sort of thing passes off! I like the girl. You know them, don't you?"

Yes," replied Herbert, "I met them abroad."

"They have been in Lincolnshire and are

returning homewards, or rather, to Surrey first for a few weeks.”

Thus conversing, Lisle and Barford rode by lanes and among orchards, towards the stone mansion of Branstone-Park. The day was bright and pleasant and, from one point of the ascending road, there was a backward view of the vale, watered by the broad river and enlivened by the gothic tower, the distance being marked by the faint outlines of the Welsh mountains, and the nearer landscape embellished, by May-Hill and Malvern.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEROINE.

ELSIE SEYMOUR was in her chamber, writing, amid books and papers. She had left the party unobserved, when they were going for a walk, and had escaped to her secret bower, where, with bolted door, unallured by the sunshine which played upon the carpet through the leaves of a copper beech before the window, she sat at a writing table at the foot of her bed, and pursued, unknown to others, that daily toil, which was also her daily recreation. She wrote not

for fame, but yet, for an object. Imaginative as she was, and loving poetry and romance as she naturally did, she neither composed novels, nor, excepting as an occasional relaxation, indited songs or sonnets. Her imagination soared beyond the ideal to the creative, and she longed to construct a work of practical utility ; not a dead book, but a living institution.

Elsie was self-educated. It is true that her parents had spared no pains upon her instruction, for she had learnt languages when a child and had been supplied with the best professors in music, singing, and drawing. In all these accomplishments she was admirably trained, but nevertheless, the education of her mind was purely her own work. It was in spite of these superior accomplishments (in themselves sufficient to have seduced her from more profound studies) that Elsie had read and laboured in secret, to master the most difficult problems of mathematical or metaphy-

sical science. Beneath that fair and graceful form, with those soft blue eyes and that modest smile, was the spirit of a man, and that no ordinary man, and the creative genius which is almost peculiar to the stronger sex.

Mr Seymour, her father, was clever and well read, but cold and reserved. Whenever he vouchsafed to give forth his learning he did it with a certain degree of pedantry and pretension. He was a man of unpopular manners and bore the reputation, in his own county, among his brother magistrates and squires, of being upright and well intentioned but too set-up and stiff by half. Neither was his wife without a certain degree of vulgar pride, but of a different kind from that of her husband. She fancied herself learned and, finding probably that nobody seemed to relish her somewhat prosy dissertations, had come to the conclusion that she was a flight above people in general. They were very rich and of tolerably good family, but for which redeeming points, the

world might fairly have set them down as two of the most disagreeable people in existence. However, these advantages went a great way with people in their own county, and Elsie went further still, in rendering their house an exceedingly popular resort.

。Elsie was an heiress and nobody had yet succeeded in making any apparent impression upon her heart. She had reached the age of five and twenty, having had a certain number of offers, but as far as people could judge scarcely any lovers, unless with the single exception of the handsome and accomplished Montagu, to whose conversation she would listen with an attention which she seldom vouchsafed to others. The world might sometimes almost have fancied that she felt a secret admiration for Montagu, and it is possible that she was not insensible to his charms, but yet her imagination aspired to something beyond his refinement and more ideal than even his courtesy.

Mr. and Mrs. Seymour were more than cold upon those points where their imaginative child most needed the guidance of warm hearts. Had theirs been the mere formalism of a dry religion, she might have pierced through the forms to the substance behind them, for hers was not a nature to be subdued or chilled by the coldness of others, and her will was sufficiently strong to resist discouragements and to stand the brunt of conflict.

But the self-willed imagination, which cannot be crushed, may be diverted from its legitimate channel of faith, to the vain dreams of so-called philosophy. Mr. Seymour had been reared in a school of scepticism and his father had been the companion of Bentham, Godwin and Payne. He himself had sought out free-thinkers as his associates at Cambridge and had been, through life, in the habit of disbelieving the christian miracles from their antecedent improbability. His wife was the daughter of a unitarian mother, and, though

she outwardly conformed to, yet at heart, she disbelieved, the higher doctrines of the church. Elsie's enquiring mind had soon learnt to despise the creed which her father rejected and which her mother pared down to a rationalistic standard. Of the two views, she rather clung to her mother's, as containing more of that for which her heart yearned in its satisfying fullness.

Elsie's imagination was tempered, and, in a degree, directed, by the natural kindness of her disposition. While she thought with Bolingbroke and Pope that, "on faith and hope the world may disagree," she was no less strongly persuaded that "all mankind's concern is charity." She was willing to receive into her theory the Christian principles of universal love and philanthropy.

Philanthropy became the mania of her imagination, for she hoped in the perfectibility of human nature and longed to contribute to its improvement. Woman, as she was, her day-

dream was to tread in the footsteps of the great world-improvers; in the steps of Moses and Solon, Plato and Pythagoras, S. Francis and Con-
tarini, Franklin and Howard. Her religion was a philanthropical eclecticism, and she fancied she saw God in all that was beautiful and good. And yet her mind abhorred the vague and the indefinite and, like that of the tragic poet, clung to boundaries and rules, seeking the outward restraint—the unities of art—to curb the inward exuberance. Her fancy seemed ever toiling after rules and definitions and tending to the positive. It may have been this principle of her nature which led her to prefer philanthropists, who, like Pythagoras or S. Francis, had adopted definite systems and founded institutions for their promulgation, to those who had more vaguely scattered abroad the seed of improvement. Institutions labouring for good were her beau ideal of excellence and she was an admirer of brotherhoods and sisterhoods of mercy, like

those which S. Vincent de Paul founded and propagated with such great success. She longed for an association of the kind, formed upon enlightened principles, without any peculiar religious ties and breathing the spirit of universal philanthropy.

What is more, she had been actually led to conceive the foundation of such a society ; this was the scheme which engrossed her thoughts and formed her daily occupation. The state of our large towns, and especially London, had been brought to her notice, and a wide field seemed opened for the work of benevolence. The absence of sympathy between rich and poor has been the theme of novelists as well as of politicians and divines and, the want of a class devoted to nursing the sick, has been urged by prelates and philanthropic peers. To supply this need by a machinery contrived upon her own model, was the day-dream and the ambition of Elsie Seymour.

Her plan was that of S. Clara and S. Francis minus its religion. A number of ladies were to live together under certain rules and to elect annually one sister, to preside. Their time was to be spent in visiting and nursing the sick poor. Attached to the institution, there were, in addition to the ladies, to be an equal, or greater number of poor sisters, who were to help the others in their task. There were fixed hours for their daily duties. Vows were, of course, excluded from the plan and any sister might visit her friends upon signifying her wish to the president.

Women of all creeds and denominations were admissible and, upon Sundays, might attend their several places of worship. For those who chose to remain there were to be prayers in the house, so framed as to omit all topics of controversy. Such was the outline of her scheme. According to her ambitious dream these institutions were to multiply like the

ancient brotherhoods and, by their spread, tend to the fusion of sects and the cessation of controversy.

Her resolution in carrying her plans into effect was not less remarkable than her skill in devising them. Her father and mother possessed a large acquaintance in London and she became intimate with persons of all shades of opinion. Men of talent were impressed with her conversation and, even religious minds, were captivated by her philanthropy. In the London world, where every shade of opinion is to be found, it is easy to meet with even strict churchmen, who will readily be caught by a well imagined scheme calculated to realise their fancies, without incurring public obloquy by its peculiarities. There was one class of thinkers, especially, who were attracted by the outline of Elsie's proposed sisterhood and these were a body of men who were seeking to adapt the truths of theology to the utopian speculations of the day, and who dreamed that the visions

of Owen might be leavened with the doctrine of Christ. Whatever may be thought of their attempt, these Christian socialists were men of enlarged minds and, however guided, were aiming at the amelioration of mankind. Already impressed by their writings, Elsie was still more pleased by a personal acquaintance with the professors of the new theory. She visited their working establishments and, so, made herself yet more intimate with the directing minds. To them she broached her plan, and offered to render it a helpmate to their Utopia. Her nursing sisters might be instrumental in spreading, far and wide among the poor, the visions of Christian socialism and of thus leading numbers of the industrious classes to embrace them. It is true that the chief propagators of that new philosophy were also sincere Christians, but Elsie was cautious in revealing to them the pantheism which lurked beneath her specious rule of discipline. The toleration of all creeds was perhaps not incon-

sistent with their own notions, but she glossed over the more questionable item of prayers pared down to a unitarian, or deistical standard.

Elsie had the faculty of influencing others and possessed, not only the genius of creation, but the spirit of command. Her conversation fascinated, while her will controlled, those whom she accosted with an object in view and, during her last season in London, she had gained many converts to her institution. Improvers of all kinds were struck with its feasibility. Latitudinarians approved of its rationalism, while the more orthodox were pleased with its conventual discipline. Even Bishops were induced to lend it the sanction of their names and ladies, of all sorts, were inscribed among its patronesses. Benevolent peeresses, political wives of members of parliament, semi-religious fashionables, the artistical, the scientific, the literary and the romantic, were all ready to

lend it a helping hand. And so Elsie set her scheme afloat.

She fairly launched it, but, while seeming to leave it in the hands of others, she kept it entirely in her own. Her printed list of patronesses and visitors was merely a veil to hide its workings from the eyes of the world. She had persuaded one of her converts to accompany her into those parts of London where such establishments are most needed and had, at length, taken a house in the parish of Bloomsbury, in a situation sufficiently good to induce ladies to inhabit it, yet not far removed from the haunts of poverty and wretchedness. Two ladies and three or four poor sisters had been found to start the charity; the former being retired governesses and the latter, nurses. Neither of the governesses was precisely fitted to act as presiding sister, while each was anxious to assume that office; so that it required great tact and temper on Elsie's part

to keep them from quarrelling and thus, marring the work at its first outset. Of these two, one was a unitarian and the other, a churchwoman, but as all the poor sisters preferred going to places of public worship on a Sunday, there had been no difficulty on that point.

Elsie's absence from London had been a great trial to the infant establishment. It is true that she received a daily report from the ladies who took it in turn to preside over it, and was informed of the poor they had nursed and of the various items of expense incurred. Nor was her correspondence limited to this, for she received all letters of enquiry, all offers from old maids and widows, who had any idea of becoming sisters, and all announcements and promises of subscriptions sent by admirers from various parts of the country.

* * * * *

The gong had sounded for luncheon ere the blue-eyed maiden left her task and came down, with a packet of sealed letters in her hand which

she dropped, in passing, into the post-box in the hall.

The party was seated when she entered the room. Herbert rose and she bowed to him with less than her usual amount of coldness. The room overlooked an American garden, and the sun's rays fell through the open window upon the chair where Elsie sat. Lisle thought he had seldom seen anything more lovely than that Athena face, as the light tinged the auburn hair and seemed to form an auréole for the child and votary of Pallas.

They had met in Rome where they had each pursued their dream—the one preferring the Catacombs and Basilicas, while the other found greater interest in Campana's museum and in the tombs of Veii. Both worshipped their fair-ideal in the Vatican, although one might prefer the Apollo and the other the Transfiguration, yet, in the presence of those master-works of art, their sympathies were fused into the unity of taste. With ideas so diametrically

opposed, there was a wonderful similarity in the formation of those two characters of the Christian reviver and the fair enthusiast of reason.

Seated opposite each other, they were able to talk, amid the general conversation, of Rome and its art, of people they had known and of events in which those people had since taken part. The luncheon over, they left the dining-room and walked into the garden.

"Mr. Barford says that you are engaged in the management of a reformatory," said Elsie to Herbert when they found themselves somewhat apart from the rest: "I have made him promise to take me to see it. It is a great work."

"Ours is a humble effort only. The school we have established is at present upon a small scale," replied Lisle. "We hope to extend it by degrees; for, undoubtedly, the object is a good one."

"The very best," rejoined Elsie. "The regeneration of society should commence from its dregs. Pray what is the constitution of your school?"

"At present," returned Lisle, "it is simply superintended by voluntary teachers who devote themselves to the work."

"Exactly," said Elsie: "but I hope you intend that it shall grow into a permanent association. After all, the principle of brotherhood lies at the very foundation of Christianity; I mean without reference to sectarianism. Far as I am from regarding the middle ages as other than dark ages, yet I would rather have seen the great fraternities reformed than swept away. It was a mistake to abolish a state of life in which poor human nature, in any of its ramifications, could find relief, and there is unquestionably a phasis of mortal existence which requires and pines after the life of contemplation and brotherhood. It is true that labour

and activity should be the rule in a community, but how cruel to allow of no refuge for the exceptions !”

“There is a vast deal of truth in what you say,” returned Lisle, who was much struck by her remark, “but yet it scarcely applies to our school, even supposing it to be developed to the full extent of my beau ideal, since ours would always be a community of action rather than of contemplation. Besides, I cannot admit the principle of mere contemplation, for I think that some work is absolutely necessary to the healthy condition of brotherhoods as well as of individuals. It is a mockery, it seems to me, to set up a community of anchorets on a Leicestershire hill while millions of our Christian countrymen are ignorant of the facts of redemption. I believe in the efficacy of prayer, but will God hear the prayers of those who refuse to act ? The apostles prayed, but they also labored for the conversion of the world ; and if fraternities, as vast as those of ancient days, could be restored and turned to the object of

reforming society, they would scarcely suffice for the work. There is no room now-a-days for mere contemplation. Christians must shew their faith in action. These are surely days for labour and not for a hermit life !”

“But are there not,” asked Elsie, “some minds, like that of Mary, the sister of Martha, which are better fitted to sit still and listen than to act ?”

“There are no doubt some,” replied Lisle, “less fitted for work than others, but surely all can do something. Mary was less active than Martha, but Mary could anoint the Saviour’s feet and assist in burying His Body. Those who cannot teach the ignorant, can often nurse the sick.”

“Yes, that is indeed true,” rejoined Elsie, whose thoughts were immediately recalled to her own scheme, “and I am sure that nursing sisters might be of immense use in civilizing and improving the untaught poor of our great cities. I am afraid that, perhaps, you might not quite agree with my tolerance upon religi-

ous questions, for, in establishing such a sisterhood, I would not exclude *any* calling themselves Christians. I would be truly catholic and not wedded to certain formularies. I think that S. Francis of Assisi was right in his own day in adopting a religious basis, because the religion which he adopted was not sectarian, but the universal persuasion of the age in which he lived. In our days, who shall choose from among the multitude of creeds? It seems to me more truly catholic to lay aside religious tests, allowing each individual to follow his own persuasion, while they join in the pursuits of love and charity in which all Christians *can* unite. I am afraid you will not agree with me," pursued Elsie, as she perceived a doubtful expression upon Herbert's face.

"I agree with your feelings, but not with your conclusions," replied Herbert: "if you dilute Christianity to suit all, the salt loses its savour. The spirit of compromise never produced unity, for truth admits of no compromise.

If the doctrines of the church are true, they become necessary as the basis of any scheme with a religious or charitable object. S. Francis of Assisi adopted a religious basis, I presume, because religion is the only foundation upon which his scheme could possibly have been erected. He was a great Christian reformer, and his institution was the result of his Christianity. It is true that, in his age and country, there was only one dominant form of Christianity, but there were the widely extended heresies of the Albigenses and others. Had he held your views of compromise, would he not have endeavoured to modify the doctrines of the church and render them palatable to those se taries, rather than join the Dominicans in their warfare against what they deemed to be error?"

"Oh! It is possible; and, indeed, I believe S. Francis was intolerant," answered Elsie: "I do not propose to defend him. But, supposing that I have certain truths in view;

for I am not going to discuss the Christian theory of the church ; but, supposing that I believe certain views to be true, and, that these views rather encourage than prevent my fraternizing with others, whose prejudices or convictions have taught them to believe much, in addition to that which I consider strictly true, is there any reason for my not accepting the coöperation which they are willing to grant me ? I confess that I see none. Do you suppose that S. Francis would have refused the cooperation of zealous Catholics, who believed more than himself ? It is perhaps difficult to suppose the case, but not impossible. For instance, imagine that he did not accept the doctrine of the immaculate conception, or did not believe in indulgences (both of which I think very likely, for I know but little of his history,) do you think that he would have refused the aid of zealous and pious men who happened to hold those doctrines ? My case is simply this : I agree with all Christians upon

what I conceive to be the essentials, but I find that each sect has some singularity of its own, superadded to these essentials."

"And pray what are the *essentials*?" asked Lisle.

"The existence of God and His goodness and love, the immortality of the soul and a future existence proportioned to the direction which our aspirations take here; the first of these being charity, which S. Paul ranks as the very sum of virtues; then come Faith and Hope, for we must have faith in goodness, in order to be good; and we must hope under all discouragements. These are, perhaps, among the essentials, although there are other doctrines of great importance, of which I would not underrate the value."

"Are the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation included among these, by chance?" enquired Lisle.

"Oh! I think those are doctrines of the greatest value to most minds, but, I would not entirely limit salvation to a belief in them.

Do you think that none can be saved who do not accept them?"

"That is a difficult question. I believe them to be essentially true, and that a belief in them is requisite to a saving faith. There is no other name given, whereby we can be saved, but that of the Incarnate Saviour. God has only made known this one way of salvation, therefore if others are saved, it is through His uncovenanted mercy."

"However, I was wrong to get into this discussion," rejoined Elsie. "I wanted simply to explain my own position, and had no intention of questioning anybody's else's. I take the tolerant view of various denominations, believing them all to be within the pale of salvation and, holding this view, I join in establishing a sisterhood of nurses, like *sœurs de charité*, but not tied to any one form of belief, as we consider it sufficient that they should be practical Christians in their lives and zealous in the all-essential virtue of Christian charity."

"Do you really mean to say that such an institution is contemplated?" asked Lisle.

"Yes, but I am afraid from your tone that it would not meet with your sympathy. To say the truth, Mr. Lisle, I feel certain you like *sœurs de charité*, but that you cannot endure our tolerance, our true catholic spirit. Tell me honestly, is this not so?"

"Endure your tolerance? I admit that tolerance is a great virtue, and that it is simply an offshoot of Christian charity; but I confess that I cannot trace any similarity between tolerance of error and the spirit of catholic truth. I cannot conceive how, by jumbling together an infinity of conflicting sects, you can arrive at one catholic or universal truth. Your theory will not hold good if you apply it to the sciences and there must be truth and falsehood in theology as well as in political economy or ethics. Take for instance the science of medicine, which applies to the body much as theology does to the soul, and in which there

exist precisely the same difficulties. There is the old orthodox school of medicine, tracing down by continuous tradition almost from Hippocrates and Galen, and then there are the numerous medical sects, which have sprung up in later times—such as morisonians, hydropathists, mesmerists and homœopathists—”

“Take care how you abuse homœopathy,” said Elsie.

“Far be it from me to abuse any of them—I was merely citing the parallel. Are you a homœopathist?”

“Yes.”

“Well, pardon me, but what would you say to a homœopathist jumbling allopathy, hydropathy, and homœopathy with occasional doses of Morison’s and Blair’s pills and adopting the whole system? Or would you prefer extracting that which all recognize in common, throwing the peculiarities aside? then you would have very little medicine left—for which (for

I confess myself rather sceptical in medicine) you might be none the worse."

"But do you know, Mr. Lisle, I think I am willing to accept your parallel, for I think it will be found that there is truth in each system, and, that the various quackeries have arisen from the public having felt some want in the old system. By degrees we may hope that these deficiencies will be supplied, or rather that the orthodox school of medicine, as you call it, will recognize the discoveries of homœopathy and all the other pathies."

"Exactly so, and I also accept your argument most completely. The various sects of dissent have arisen precisely from the cause you state. There has been some defect in the working of the church which each has sought to remedy, and, as the church restores her perfect discipline, she will supply those wants herself. If the church had not courted nobles and kings to the neglect of the humble there

would have been no cause for the rise of puritanism, which was the vengeance of Christ's neglected poor upon the pampered servility of the hierarchy. If men like Nicholas Ferrar had been more numerous within the pale of the true fold, and had bishops and priests followed the rule of gospel simplicity, there had been no need for the schism of Penn and Fox in the corrupt days of Charles. If the church had proclaimed the doctrines of repentance and faith, and duly explained the Sacraments of Christ, there would have been no reason for the rise of Baptists and others. Wesley's apology lies simply in church neglect, for it is evident that he would have been a churchman, if she had allowed of earnestness. And when we come to the sects of the present day, what have they been, for the most part, but so many censures upon our coldness and relaxed discipline? When the church restores her discipline and combines, with orthodox practice, a com-

plete return to primitive simplicity and zeal, there will be no farther room for justifiable dissent, although there may still be the snare of heresy and schism."

"You take a new view, I think, for a high churchman; do you not?"

"Not new, I think, but one not sufficiently insisted upon, perhaps."

"Well, but tell me, Mr. Lisle, do you entirely give up the high churchmanship of the days of Charles the first? You seem to condemn churchmen for courting kings and nobles."

"Yes I do. I consider that the tory High-churchmanship of the past was an error, and that the church had no business either to aim at, or depend upon, secular power. I am not one of those who sigh after the church of the middle-ages, much as I love mediæval taste and poetry of art."

"I suppose you would prefer Gladstone to Lord John Manners; the man of the present to the dreamer of the past?"

"And yet I am half a Derbyite. I do not like truckling to democracy."

"A Derbyite! How shocking! But we will not discuss politics. Before you told me you were a Derbyite, I was in the way of becoming a convert to your theories, but that has upset everything!" said Elsie laughing.

They had now completed the circuit of the shrubbery walks, and found themselves once more in the terrace garden.

Elsie turned to Mr. Barford and made some remarks upon the flowers, and was soon engaged in conversation with him. Herbert scarcely heeded what Mr. Barford was saying, so intently was he gazing upon the beautiful face of Miss Seymour, beaming with intelligence and lighted by a charmingly expressive smile. At that moment he fancied he had never conceived, still less actually seen, any one so near female perfection. She offered, perhaps in all respects, a contrast, not to himself,

but to that ideal of feminine character which would seem likely to ensure his happiness in life. Lisle was not without that need of sympathy, which is an attribute of a creative imagination, and his happiness would require a heart to yield to his, and a fancy to adopt his dreams. Such was not Elsie's. She was herself a schemer and her imagination was, at least, as powerful and tyrannical as his. She was too much like the oak to play the part of the clinging ivy or the woodbine.

Nevertheless Herbert was convinced of her perfection and that the dissimilarity in their characters was an earnest of their being suited to each other.

He bade farewell to his hosts, and was about to bow to Miss Seymour, when she extended her hand with a warmth of manner which she rarely vouchsafed to any one. Her image continued to haunt him as he sauntered towards his home.

CHAPTER VI.**ARTHUR WINSLOW.**

IN a small London sitting-room with folding doors opening into the adjoining bed-chamber, sat a man no longer in the prime of life, whose face bore traces of deep care and sorrow. The light of a single lamp enabled the solitary inmate of the apartment to pour over the contents of a book which lay before him upon the table.

Some remains of his former beauty yet lin-

gered in the expression of Arthur Winslow. His figure was tall and graceful, while a bald head surmounted features of which the delicacy and beauty had been tarnished, but not effaced, by a course of sin and dissipation.

His dress, and the room in which he sat, showed signs of untidiness and neglect. He was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the book, but without reading. He pushed it aside and, placing his arms upon the table, buried his face and groaned in agony, he then arose, and walking about the room mechanically grasped his hat and stick, which he presently relinquished and reseated himself.

“What right have I to expect him? And yet if he knew—But God, thou knowest—yes, thou knowest! Nevertheless, if such a case as mine be known to Thee, I cannot believe that it would be forsaken! Oh! What a perplexity it is. Is it *real*, or is it *deception*? Is it a dupe after all? Fool, fool, fool that I am, and ever have been! Oh, Lord have mercy!”

At length a knock was heard at the street door, and presently a visitor was announced.

"Uncle Winslow!"

"Herbert! Thank God, you are come!"

"How *are* you uncle?" enquired Herbert more kindly than his father would have thought prudent, or than he himself had at first intended: "You look ill. You have changed your rooms. These are small and close."

"They are too large for *me*."

There was a considerable pause which neither seemed disposed to be the first to break.

"Uncle, you have something to tell me!" at length ventured Herbert: "I have come because you wrote to me. If you have any communications to make, or anything in which I can help you, do not be afraid to speak, for remember how your sister loved you, and that I am that sister's son."

Arthur Winslow gave one look at the speaker

and, burying his face in his hands, upon the table, sobbed like a child.

There was another long pause.

"Uncle," recommenced Herbert, at length, "the Deanside property will surely suffice for your debts. It will no doubt be a terrible affliction to you to sell that old family place, but if you really and honestly deplore the past, you cannot regret the sacrifice."

"A sacrifice which involves *you* as well as myself!" exclaimed Winslow: "no, I will never consent to depriving you of the entail! Heavens! that even in my repentance I should be inflicting wrong upon others!"

"Uncle, listen to me. If I am convinced that you are sincere, I shall not feel that I have made any sacrifice in giving up the Deanside entail. But, tell me, tell me honestly, uncle, tell me—"

"Tell you? I will tell you all. It is scarcely a month ago that this change came

over me, since which I have endeavoured to separate myself from my former life and all its follies and sins."

"Have you sought for help from the right source, where alone it can be found?" asked Herbert.

"Yes," replied Winslow with some timidity.

"In prayer?" enquired Herbert.

"My prayers are so cold, so poor," returned Winslow.

"Not so, Christ's merits and His Sacrifice, if you pleaded them to God!"

Winslow remained silent and only sighed heavily.

"Tell me Uncle," pursued Herbert: "how did this change come over you, if the question is not an unkind one? was it a sudden change?"

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Winslow, who then buried his face once more in his hands and kept silence: "I cannot, I dare not, tell

you," continued the penitent after another interval: "it was very sudden. One evening I was going—I dare not say where. There would have been no return—It would have been death—death—eternal death. I passed along the streets until I came to a church which several persons were entering. Until that moment I had rushed along quickly and fearlessly, but in an instant a sudden panic and trembling came over me. I shook like a child and felt as if I should fall to the ground. The church door was open and I went in, I know not why. There were open seats and I sat upon one of them. The service proceeded and was more beautiful than anything I had ever heard. It was so long since I had been into a church, and the prayers recalled the days of childhood, the old church at Deanside, and my mother. At last I fairly gave in. I knelt and tried to pray, and then the tears came, and I knelt on. The prayers were over, but I continued to kneel for a long time, I

suppose ; for at length I was aroused by an old man tapping my arm and telling me that everybody had left the church and that he had been waiting for some time to close it. Once more in the streets I felt utterly bewildered. I wandered home and threw myself upon my bed but was unable to sleep. Once or twice I returned to my first purpose. I once held a pistol. My God forgive me ! However the thought of eternity came upon me more forcibly than ever."

"Had you had great losses just at that time?" asked Herbert: "tell me, uncle, what—what could have induced you to rush to the brink of so fearful a precipice?"

"I had lost much but not exactly at that very time. I cannot account for it, but a sort of despair came over me. It must have been a last but terrible warning to my soul. It was a fierce conflict between God and Satan and I was, during that awful night, alternating between self-destruction and prayer. I did not

know how to pray, but the idea of prayer flashed across me like lightning in a dark night. I took up the pistol! I know not how, but the moment after, I had thrown it aside and was kneeling upon the ground and sobbing at the recollection of the past. I could do little more than call upon God for I was altogether ignorant. I said, "Lord help me! Lord teach me! Oh, my God! my Saviour!" After a time I fell asleep and when I awoke it was already late in the day. I felt calmer but afraid of myself. My first determination was to go in search of the church where I had been upon the previous evening, in order that I might find a clergyman to advise me, for I felt utterly at a loss what to do, or where to turn. When I was in the street I began to think of the world's opinion. Supposing I were to be seen going into a church, how terribly I should be sneered at by my acquaintance! On my way I met an old friend who told me I looked ill and would have turned to walk with me, but that I feigned

to be in a hurry. After some difficulty I found the street where the church was situated, but feared to go in. I walked past it without even looking whether the door was open or closed, and although I saw that a house for the clergy adjoined it, yet I allowed myself to return home dissatisfied and miserable. How could such a sinner as I think of speaking about religion to a clergyman? I felt as if I were acting the hypocrite. I shut myself up all day and bade the servant tell my friends that I was not at home. At night I went again to seek the church for I was ashamed of my terror of the morning and determined to go in. I knelt behind a pillar where I was unobserved. After prayers there was, this time, a short extempore sermon. The clergyman said that it was his custom on fridays, and this was friday, to say a few words upon the all-important topic of our redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ, who died upon the

cross to save us. His address was so simple that the poorest could understand it, and yet so affecting that there were tears in the eyes of all. His whole discourse was upon the fact that Jesus Christ suffered and died to save sinners, which he called an old well-known topic, but to me it seemed quite new. He spoke so clearly and earnestly of the Saviour and His fearful agony upon the cross that I felt as if I saw it before me. Even the good old people, who knew it all before, seemed affected by the words of the speaker, for he spoke as if he loved Jesus Christ, and longed to lead others to love Him too. I felt that every word was addressed to me and that God seemed to be telling me how I could be saved: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' I listened to every word he said, joining in the concluding prayer, and kneeling on until the old man again warned me of the closing of the doors. This time I asked him where the

clergyman lived who preached the sermon, and he informed me that it was close by, but that I had better return upon the morrow to see him, telling me the hours of service."

"I dare say if the clergyman had known he would rather have seen you at once—that same night," said Herbert. "The officiousness of those beadles!"

"Poor old fellow! No, it was kindly meant. I went home happier than I had yet felt, but when I came to think over all I had heard, how terrible my state seemed! I was worse than the worst of sinners. I had, as the clergyman said, crucified Christ afresh and, far worse, trampled Him under foot. I thought and sometimes still fancy that my case is that of those who have sinned against the Holy Spirit and can never be saved! Great God! Have mercy! have mercy!"

"Uncle! uncle Arthur! Do not despair. There is always hope while there is life, and the spiritual life is not finally extinguished

- while the conscience warns us, and our hearts still fear.”

“ Yes—true, very true, Herbert ! but *you* cannot conceive the state of such an one such—such a lost wretch as I was. I had denied the very existence of the God who created me. I had scoffed at the Saviour who died to redeem me. I had ridiculed the gift of grace by which in infancy the Holy Ghost had once sanctified me. I had been a professed infidel, a profligate of the worst kind. I felt too that my case was so different from that of converts from heathenism, since I had once been made a Christian and sanctified and had spurned and trampled upon the gifts of God, and upon the Blood of Jesus. Oh God ! Have mercy upon me a sinner. Sometimes I do not wonder at converts being tempted to deny the grace received in infancy. It would be so much pleasanter to begin one’s Christian life afresh and regard one’s past state of sinfulness as heathenism, but this is impossible. The

Corinthian in S. Paul's epistle had once been made a Christian and could no longer plead heathen ignorance and so, too, my sins have been against light and grace. The sins of a baptized Christian, *not* of an ignorant heathen!"

"Yes undoubtedly," replied Herbert, "the sins of the regenerate are very fearful—but not beyond the forgiveness which Christ's blood has purchased. You should look out of yourself unto Jesus Christ, and meditate upon His cross and resurrection, contemplating Him at the right hand of the Father, pleading for you, and calling you to Himself. The dying Israelites were not to look at their own wounds but at the brazen serpent. You should imitate them by gazing upon the cross of Christ. He will make you whole."

"Thank you—yes—I will think of what you say."

"Tell me, uncle, did you see the clergyman?"

"Yes. I called in a day or two, and have

often seen him since. I received much consolation from him. I opened all my griefs to him and received much comfort and strength through a means well fitted to prepare the sinner for the blessed sacrament. Those Christian institutions remind me of what you were saying, for we are first taught to scrutinize our own sinfulness, and then sent for consolation to the body and blood of Jesus Christ."

"Exactly—our own weakness and failure is our first lesson and Christ's all sufficient merits and strength our next. We must first learn to distrust ourselves and then to rely solely upon Jesus Christ."

"How clearly you explain! My dear Herbert, how I thank God for this interview!"

There was a pause, during which Lisle was pondering how he could least offensively make his proposition with regard to the Deanside estate.

"What engagements have you to-morrow, uncle?"

"None—that is—excepting in the morning. You know to-morrow is Michaelmas Day."

"Yes, I know ; and I should like to pass it with you, uncle, as our mode of spending it will now be the same. Besides, after church, I want to—to call upon Messrs. Whitson and Gregg, in Lincoln's Inn Fields about those business matters we have to settle."

"Ah ! yes, yes ! I want to sell my life interest in Deanside—to you—Herbert, if you will buy it ?"

"That will not cover your debts, will it, uncle ?"

"No ; as you ask me the question ; no !"

"Will it be even *near* the mark ?"

"The rental of the Deanside property should be three thousand a year—near upon two thousand acres of fair land—I should say the estate was worth a hundred thousand pounds."

"At thirty years' purchase ! that is high."

"It is low rented. The farms should be revalued."

"And what would your life-estate be worth, uncle? What would an insurance office give you?"

"Not above ten years' purchase, if so much."

"And what are your debts, if I may venture upon such a question?"

"Ah, there it is! in addition to the interest of the mortgages I owe a considerable sum."

"To what amount is it involved?"

"The interest alone consumes the whole rental, indeed the money is borrowed from Jews upon that security. I owe large debts besides, for which I pay no interest."

"Do you owe seventy thousand pounds?"

"Ay! more I dare say!"

"The reason that S. Paul said—'owe no man anything,' was to prevent scandal to the church and it is such for a christian to be in debt. If I had the Deanside property I should sell it to pay these debts, and I think that, as a Christian, it would be impossible to do otherwise. If you will sell the property for what it

will fetch and, of course, to the best advantage, we shall be able to see our way towards satisfying the other claims. We will cut off this entail to-morrow."

"Oh, Herbert! never—I will never."

"Uncle, you must! There is nothing else to be done. I should be worse than a heathen were I to preserve the entail under such circumstances. Good night, uncle Arthur."

So saying, Herbert rose and took his departure. On the following day they met by appointment and spent it together, Herbert accompanying his uncle to church. In the afternoon they called upon Messrs Whitson and Gregg and, after considerable opposition on the part of Arthur Winslow, agreed to the sale of the Herefordshire property. Mr. Whitson questioned him about his liabilities and, casting them up, insisted that they were less than he had supposed.

"Mr. Whitson was a stout, snub-nosed man of sixty with close cropped grisly hair, a coloured

satin cravat, enamel shirt-studs, and clothes in which old fashions and new were struggling for pre-eminence.

"Now look here," said Mr. Whitson in a patronizing yet conciliatory tone, as he ran his pen up the column of figures which he had carelessly scribbled upon a sheet of paper; "You see the seventy thousand pounds have dwindled down to thirty."

"Let me see," replied Winslow. "You have not got everything. My debts of honour?"

"Ah, yes! Well! What do you set them at?"

"I owe twenty or thirty thousand pounds at least."

"Impossible! How so?"

"I once signed a bond to—to—"

"A bond—for how much?"

"Twenty thousand."

"Who to? To Madame D'Aulnay perhaps?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Winslow starting and

colouring upon hearing her name repeated by Whitson. "Yes, yes—well," he continued as he tried to recover himself. "Well! That makes it fifty thousand, and then there are ten for gambling debts besides, at the very least."

"And those are your debts of honour, Mr. Winslow?"

Winslow bit his lip, and was rising from his chair when Herbert interposed:

"Come Mr. Whitson, we want to know what Deanside will fetch?"

"Deanside? Well I suppose it ought to fetch upwards of a hundred thousand pounds, but I should doubt, as things go now-a-days, its selling for more than eighty thousand. It will more than cover Mr. Winslow's debts. It might sell better if it was parcelled out in lots and put up to auction. Let me see. Monmouth is not far off. Part of the property lies on the Wye, I think?"

"Yes—yes," said poor Winslow with a sigh

at the thought of parcelling out his ancestral acres, the once happy home of his youth.

"Some of that should sell for building and accommodation land. Good pasture near the Wye!" exclaimed Whitson smacking his lips.

"It is the wrong side of the river for that I should fancy," remarked Herbert, who did not relish the lawyer's tone. "Well, Mr. Whitson, we must now take steps to cut off this entail and sell the estate to the best advantage."

After some farther conversation in the musty room, with its shelves of japanned cases labelled with names of wealthy lords and commoners of England, Herbert proposed an adjournment of their meeting to another day, when Mr. Whitson should have made some arrangements for the sale of the property.

Passing beneath the dark archway which conducts from Lincoln's Inn Fields, Winslow and Lisle wended by Covent Garden towards

the more fashionable quarter of London. They parted at the Circus and Lisle proceeded in the direction of his club, his thoughts intent upon the terrible trial which he felt this sale of Deanside would be to his uncle. To himself it was, no doubt, a deprivation. To be heir in tail to a lovely property and a fine old mansion on the Wye was a fair position to resign, but Herbert believed that the sacrifice ought to be made and he had resolved to make it. But supposing that, after all, his uncle's change should turn out to be a deception? Such reflections presented themselves to his mind but he rejected them. He had done what was right, and might leave the rest to God.

While these, and such-like thoughts were tormenting him, Herbert's eyes rested upon two persons approaching him on the northern side of Pall Mall, a lady and gentleman, who appeared to recognize him, and whose faces

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he remembered. The lady bowed and both stopped :

"Miss Elliott, I think ? Are you living in London ?"

"No, we are only passing through."

"Have you long left Alfreton ?"

"Sometime ; we have been paying visits," replied Katharine.

"Are you staying in town ?" enquired Frank Elliott, for it was he who was walking with his sister.

"No, I am returning to Gloucestershire in a day or two."

"My brother is going to Egypt," said Katharine, "and we have been together making purchases for the Nile and the Desert. We are just come from Fortnum and Mason's and are going to buy waterproofs at Charing Cross."

Katharine looked remarkably well, and Herbert could not help contrasting her pure beauty with the more glowing splendour of

Elsie Seymour. The one was the simple artless girl, fitted to become a staid housewife and a worthy matron, the other a bright child of genius, whose soarings would be superior, even should she choose to stoop, to the toils of the domestic hearth. When he sat in his club, writing to his father, and in the retirement of his lodging, these fancies still floated through his brain, until it ended in the victory of the blue-eyed Elsie with the golden tresses.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

THE pear-trees had turned bright crimson and nothing could exceed the loveliness of Cawthorne.

Old John Dolby crouched over the fire upon which a pot was simmering, while Sally sat knitting by the window and Phoebe was engaged in sewing near the door.

"I hear the gate go to. Who be that a coming now? I dare say it be the young man." And in truth, it turned out to be Perdon

calling after school hours to visit his betrothed.

"Well Master Perdon," enquired old Sally after the usual salutations, "be this true about the Squire's being taken ill? They say he be taken desperate ill."

"Well I heard the doctor was sent for last night and that now they have despatched a message by telegraph to London. It was gout, I heard, in the night. A very bad attack."

"I have heerd as he had some bad news from London one day. May be that has caused it. Summut about his son, Master Herbert and them Winslows, but I don't know. This was what the servants have said. She was a nice good creature as ever lived, was Mrs. Lisle, and she was a Winslow, but they wern't all as good as she. They say Mr. Winslow, the brother, be a downright bad gentleman. So I've heerd say."

"Well, but what could Mr. Herbert have done? I am sure he can have done no harm."

"May be he've been took in by Master Winslow and lent him some money or summut. He be so good. These bad gamester folks might easy get the better of him, and this may have worked on the Squire's mind, perhaps?"

The discussion was interrupted by a gentle tap at the door, followed by the entrance of Miss Laura Lisle, who shook hands hurriedly with each of the inmates and, shortly afterwards, Perdon rose to take leave, and Sally despatched Phœbe in search of her children.

"How is the squire, miss?" enquired old Dolby of Laura who had seated herself upon one of the wooden chairs.

"He is very ill. I have only just left him. My sister is with him and we are expecting my cousin home this afternoon. We have sent up to London for a physician. There is every fear that the stomach is attacked and that there is inflammation in a vital part."

"Oh! dear, dear!" exclaimed old Dolby.
"May God have mercy on him!"

"I have been sitting with him trying to lead him to think upon—upon God," Laura hesitated as if she had been about to open her heart too fully to these cottagers.

"Ah!" exclaimed Sally. "And is 'un turning to God and repenting his past life? Ah! may God spare him till he turn to him! It be a terrible thing for any man to die in his sins and not know as Christ died to save him."

"Indeed, indeed it is! we must all pray for him—I hope you will remember him in your prayers."

"Ay, that a'will and old John too I'll be bound, won't ye John, remember to pray for the squire?"

"Yes ma'am and might we be so bold as to ask ye to pray for 'im now?"

"Most gladly!" answered Laura, who felt

pleased to find such readiness on the part of the poor old people.

They had scarcely risen from their knees when a servant came to summon Laura to the court, informing her that her cousin Herbert had arrived.

When she reached the house she was told that Mr. Lisle had been in great suffering during her absence and that Herbert had gone to his room.

The October evening was closing in and a grey murky atmosphere overhung the darkening landscape which extended before the mulioned windows of Mr. Lisle's bed-room. A fire burned in the grate and a smell of medicines pervaded the chamber. Upon an antique four-post bed lay extended the old man's suffering form. His face was ghastly and his eyes were dull and heavy; with his hands he was convulsively grasping a pillow as if to relieve his agonies. Herbert stood by the side

of the bed, while he held a draught prescribed by the doctor from Gloucester. The old man shook his head as Herbert approached with the medicine and endeavoured to speak, but violent spasms choked his utterance. It was terrible to behold his pains uncheered by one holy thought. Herbert pressed his hand and, leaning over the bed, watched anxiously for the spasms to pass. Meanwhile Laura opened the door and, entering the room, moved noiselessly to the bed side, where she sat and gazed upon the patient. There was an interval in his anguish, when Mr. Lisle, although exhausted, was able to turn and smile upon his son. The smile was faint and feeble, yet Herbert felt it a relief and consolation at the moment.

The room was nearly in darkness, being lighted only by the rays of the fire, when Mr. Lisle spoke in a low voice to Herbert—

“ I am very ill—I—I want to know about

Arthur Winslow—How could you let him take you in ? the rogue—the rogue !”

“No, father—he has not taken me in. He is really in earnest in his reformation.”

“Not he—the cunning dog, I know him ! He has swindled you out of Deanside and broken my heart. I know the scamp of old. It was my one wish for you, that you might possess the estates of the two families, the Lisles and the Winslows. It is a desperate home thrust to bear in this cruel agony. Oh ! my boy ! my boy !”

He had scarcely spoken the words when the spasms returned with such force as to deprive him of utterance. For a long time the pain was so acute as to check his articulation and he appeared far too agitated to allow of their addressing him. Herbert and Laura were especially anxious to introduce the subject of religion and the thought of God, but no opportunity offered for more than a passing word.

In some of his intervals of comparative calm he would give vent to fearful oaths and exclamations and upon one such occasion Laura ventured to say :

“ My dear uncle, I would give my life to free you from this pain, but I would give more still, if I had it, to preserve you from taking God’s name in vain.”

“ Humph ! Ha ! What’s that ? I beg your pardon for swearing. It is very bad—a bad habit. But, I am in such pain. There now, it is coming on again,” and presently he was tortured by another fit.

An express had been sent to summon Edward Baring, whose wife was naturally anxious for his presence at such a moment, and all felt that the arrival of a clergyman might afford them an opportunity of seriously addressing the sick man upon the state of his soul.

The express train brought down the London physician who was speedily ushered into Mr. Lisle’s room, having first consulted with the

country practitioner whom he found waiting below. The visit to the patient was followed by an interview with Herbert, from which the latter went forth anxious and depressed.

“Prepare yourself for the worst, as the chances are strongly against his recovery.”

On the following morning, after again visiting Mr. Lisle, the physician returned to London. The same day, at a later hour, Edward Baring arrived in answer to the summons. Herbert had been in great anxiety for his coming and lost no time in introducing him into the room where his father lay.

It was daylight, but the blinds were partly down to prevent the glare from dazzling the sick man's eyes. It happened fortunately that, at the time when Baring arrived, there was a lull in the violence of the symptoms and, instead of the spasms, he felt only a dull numbing pain. This continued without intermission, but varied in acuteness, and when Edward entered the room he had been suffering

less torture than at any previous period during the day. He was looking towards the door when it opened and Edward appeared with an expression of mingled fear and sadness. The unexpected visit combined with the lugubrious look on his face, at once surprised and shocked Mr. Lisle. Laura was sitting at the farther side of the bed and her first perception of her brother-in-law's presence was caused by a deep groan from the bed which led her to turn her eyes in that direction. Her uncle's countenance, pale and ghastly, was vacantly fixed upon the new comer, and his dull leaden eyes seemed riveted upon his nephew's face. He spoke not a word, but moaned as the young clergyman approached his bed-side.

"Mr. Lisle," said Edward tenderly, "you are in great pain?"

The sick man only groaned.

"You are very ill—dear Mr. Lisle—you are in great danger—are you prepared for the worst?"

"Oh, God!" exclaimed the old man in a stifled voice of agony resembling a suppressed scream, and then he stared at vacancy and seemed to relapse into a half conscious state.

Edward took his uncle's hand and endeavoured to recall his attention to the terrible thought which he felt must be presented to his mind now or never: "my uncle! Mr. Lisle! listen! are you prepared to die? are you ready to meet God, and answer for your past life at His tribunal? do you believe in Heaven and Hell, and in Jesus Christ who died to save you?"

A fearful expression came over the face of the sufferer whose teeth seemed clenched and his eyes distorted. He was making an effort to speak but could scarcely give utterance to his words, until, at length, in a feeble, but irritated voice he said:

"Go! go! go! I am tired! I'm tired! Leave me alone. To-morrow, to-morrow—"

"To-morrow? to-morrow may never come

for you, dear uncle, upon earth. God wants you to-day, now."

"Oh, no! go away now—please do—leave me in peace."

"In peace! there is no peace but in Christ." And, so saying, Baring prayed in silence for some minutes ending aloud with an earnest petition to God to touch the heart of the sufferer and grant him a true conversion ere it should be too late.

During this prayer Herbert came to the door but, fearing to interrupt, did not venture into the room; at its conclusion, however, he approached his father's bed and openly joined his cousin in imploring him to turn to the Saviour. He reminded him of the thief upon the Cross, and spoke of the passion and crucifixion of Our Lord. There was a look of bewilderment and terror upon the face of the dying man. Herbert took his hand. Mrs. Baring then entered the room and, at Herbert's desire, they all four

knelt down while Edward again offered a short prayer. The evening was closing in and the sick man appeared much exhausted. The doctor having arrived, they left them for a short time together, and when he came out he informed Herbert that his father was dozing.

Edward sat and watched by his bed waiting an opportunity to lead his thoughts to Heaven, but alas! none such occurred. He dozed on, hour after hour, until, at length, he ceased to breathe. His end was almost imperceptible and he died, some said, with a smile upon his face.

The survivors trusted that their prayers might have been heard and that, unknown to them, his soul might have turned to God and, although the hope rested upon grounds so feeble that others could scarcely be deceived by them, it is a great relief to be suffered, when all else is lost, to retain hope.



Mr. Lisle of Cawthorne was dead and preparations were made for his funeral. The blinds were down and the church hung with black. Upon the day preceding the last mournful rite, wearied with the bustle, dejected beyond measure, yet sustained by the excitement, Herbert strolled forth for a solitary walk.

Passing through the deer-park, he found his way into the grass rides which extended for miles through the woods and, along these he wandered, absorbed in his meditations. He thought over his past life, squandered, as it seemed to him, so vainly and recalled his mother's early training and the undeserved kindnesses which both father and mother had lavished upon him. Now, both were dead and he looked forward with a shudder to the unknown future!—What future could possibly equal such by-gone happiness as his? "Oh! give me back that childhood when my mother

fondled me and my father caressed me," thought he: "give me back the boyhood's rambles and rides by my father's side!"

The day was clear and lovely and the sun's bright rays sparkled in the dew-drops upon the tinted trees, the long grass and the fern. The straight vistas of the beech-wood were chequered with alternate light and shade, like the avenue of life, whose mysterious bourne the eye of faith can alone discern. But there is no such mystery about the clear autumnal sunshine of England. It is sharp and distinct in its outlines and withal rich and mellow in its hues, as the pcesy of a southern clime. Life was enjoyment upon such a day, and the present seemed to contrast strangely with the painful memories of the past.

As he advanced along the mossy turf of this woodland scene, his path was crossed by many a fleet hare and purple-necked pheasant, while here and there, a squirrel might be seen gam-

boling upon the grass, or skipping from bough to bough in quest of the numerous beech-masts.

The enjoyment of the scene was in itself sufficient to divert Herbert's mind for some moments from its painful recollections, but this served only to render the contrast more striking when he returned to them.

He continued to wander, scarce knowing where he went, until he reached an open space presenting to his view a truly sylvan scene, such as we may imagine to have been frequent in England's forest days. Here and there a gnarled oak rising from the mossy sward, while a thicket of fern and broom overspread the adjacent ground. The nook was hemmed-in by tall trees, and the spot had an air of seclusion from the haunts of men. The stump of a felled oak formed an inviting seat, upon which Herbert was tempted to rest and pursue his musings in uninterrupted quiet.

The grave of a near relation is a great moni-

tor, and past sins look most heinous and wilful while death stands close at hand. How short a span from one generation to another and how soon the Lises had followed each other, from father to son, to the grave ! A few years and it will be his turn too, and another will have become the proprietor of Cawthorne ! In thus contemplating the great fact of death his past life seemed to have been utterly mispent and his future station, but a poor preparation for meeting his God and, to say the truth, his first impulse was a feeling of discontent with his position. He thought how much better and therefore, happier, he should have been, as a missionary to the heathen, or a preacher of the gospel to the poor.

“ Oh ! ” thought he, “ that I could give up all and follow Christ ! ” The few years between the present moment and the grave would thus be spent in earning “ other talents,” and in fitting himself to reign with Christ in Glory ; whereas, now, it seemed so difficult not to

fritter away a portion of life in unprofitable worldliness. Thus musing, his thoughts naturally roved to his late interview with his uncle, his sudden conversion, his own concession of the Deanside entail and the shock which seemed to have been the immediate cause of his father's death. This fact made him almost feel a distaste to the subject of Arthur Winslow's change. "Supposing," thought he, "that, after all, Arthur Winslow should be deceiving, deceiving himself, if not others, and that I should have signed away Deanside, and broken my father's heart for this!"

After indulging for some time in this melancholy rêverie he reflected that he had acted with the best intentions; but his father was dead and he could not but feel very sad. He was roused from his contemplation by a distant sound of music which floated through the air. It was a soft clear voice which sang, but too distant to enable him to distinguish the words.

At times it died away and then, as the breeze wafted it towards him, increased in depth and distinctness, until at length he caught some of the words and these accorded well with the pensive strain :—

S O N G .

The leaves are down, the trees are brown
 And autumn follows spring ;
Thus, mid-life past, comes age at last,
 And summer-birds take wing ;
The summer-birds, the leaves of green,
 The flowers and flies with gaudy sheen,
The wood-dove in its leafy screen,
 Have ceased to shine and sing ;
And I am like an autumn grove,
 My life is seared and brown.
Oh well-a-day ! My summer's love,
 Is withered and is flown ;
And I am left forlorn, bereft,
 In all the earth alone !
Alone ! alone !
 In all the earth alone ! alone !

There was a touching pathos in the conclusion of the stanza, and the whole harmonized completely with the feelings of Herbert at that moment and seemed to root him to the spot as he drank in the soft and sorrowful strain. There was a melancholy past description in the tones of the female voice which uttered the sounds; for there could be no mistaking the feminine quality of the music.

No one appeared and Herbert could not help picturing some fairy vision of romance to supply the absence of the reality. The wild sylvan scene and his own loneliness, combined to cause him secretly to long for some consoler, such as Elsie or as Katharine! "Oh!" thought he, "that this fairy were the beautiful Elsie, or even the gentle Katharine!"

While his eyes were directed towards a mountain-ash before him, he was startled by a sigh close by his side, and turned to look. A tall and graceful female figure, graceful notwithstanding its worn haggard look, stood, at

a few paces from his seat, among the rank fern and shaded by the dark foliage of a yew. The woman, seen from the distance at which Herbert sat, was strikingly handsome. She wore no bonnet. A white kerchief alone covered her head, and this was bound so tightly around it as completely to conceal the hair. The hood of her dark mantle hung as if it had lately fallen backwards from her head. The mantle did not reach far below her waist, and beneath it appeared a skirt of lilac silk. The vision was lovely as the phantom of a dream. Black eyes and eye-brows, with features of Grecian regularity and an expression of the most indescribable sadness, met his gaze. Her eyes were fastened upon him in a species of dreamy abstraction. When he returned her glance, wondering whether his senses deceived him, she suddenly assumed an expression of wrath. Her look then seemed fixed in anger upon him as if she would spring like some wild beast and tear him to pieces. He rose

from his seat and faced her but, ere he had done so, her whole appearance altered and her wild laugh echoed through the woods :

“ Ha, ha, ha, ha ! ”

And then she began singing—

All alone ! Ha, ha, ha !
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

All alone ! My heart's of stone,
And I don't care for any !
All alone ! I laugh and moan,
And no man cares a penny !
All alone ! Ha, ha, ha !
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

All alone, from morn till even,
There's no rest for me !
All alone till I'm in Heaven,
And then my soul is free !
All alone ! ha, ha, ha !
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

This was followed by a roar of discordant laughter and then she clapped her hands and disappeared among the trees, singing and laughing as she retreated.

Herbert was too much overcome by surprise and painful feelings to endeavour to stop her. Her features were well known to him, and yet her attire was so unlike his previous impressions that he had at first hesitated to pronounce her name.

Full of his adventure he returned homewards in better spirits than he had gone forth. The secret of his being so was that his thoughts were less concentrated upon himself. He was thinking of the mad woman and her strange songs.

Soon afterwards, Baring arrived and to him he poured forth the secrets of his heart. Edward had been to his Wiltshire parish since Mr. Lisle's death, and was now come back to Cawthorne for the funeral. He and Herbert

sat in the old library, talking over the present and the past.

"You must not reproach yourself," said Edward, when he had listened to Herbert's fears upon the subject of his uncle Winslow and the Deanside entail: "You have unquestionably acted as became a Christian in that matter, and to reproach yourself with your conduct is to forswear in your heart, the only true and honest course which you could pursue."

* * * * *

The coffin stood in the hall and the pallbearers were assembled in the dining-room. Herbert had been anxious to conduct the funeral as quietly and reverently as he could, but found it impossible to avoid asking a certain number of neighbours and relations.

With regard to the funeral itself, he was a great mediævalist and would gladly have adopted gothic patterns, for the coffin, the pall

and the mourners' robes, but had allowed himself to be dissuaded from this by his cousin Edward, who endeavoured to show that in these matters he should consult the taste of the age and those around him, as well as his own ideal of beauty.

It had been a sore difficulty as to whether or no Arthur Winslow should be invited, but his father's dislike to that personage had weighed with Herbert to exclude him, especially as he felt that such an invitation might embarrass his uncle under the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed.

A good deal of undertaker's parade was avoided by the shortness of the distance between the mansion and the church, which excluded the necessity of a hearse and mourning coaches, but, notwithstanding this advantage, there was enough to disgust those who were not entirely absorbed in the subject of their grief.

When the body was lowered into its tomb

the principal mourners returned into the church and assisted at the celebration of that blessed rite which is the best accompaniment to our sorrows and our joys, and which consecrates them all to the Beloved One in Whose memory we do the deed.

After the service was over, Herbert returned to gaze for the last time upon his father's coffin. He descended into the vault and offered a prayer to God. As he re-ascended the steps, he heard music, and thought he recognized the voice of the mad-girl whom he had met in the wood.

S O N G .

The silent tomb shall be my home,
I need no home beside!
There is no joy without alloy,
So, tomb, receive thy bride;
I'll be a bride in white array,
And this shall be my bridal-day.

The shroud I'll wear around,
The shroud's my wedding dress ;
The bier of the dead,
Is my nuptial bed,
And my chime the passing-bell's sound
Evermore I'll sing, and bless,
My bridegroom in his loveliness !

Herbert listened until the song had ceased and its echo died away, when, looking around the church-yard, he fancied he perceived her form behind the tall yew hedge.

He glanced fondly at the old gray church and gave a last lingering look at the open vault as he retreated into the grounds.

END OF VOL. L

